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THE

CANTERBURY TALES

BY

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

From the Text

AND WITH THE NOTES AND GLOSSARY

OF

THOMAS TYRWHITT.

CONDENSED AND ARRANGED UNDER THE TEXT.

A NEW EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWARD CORBOULD.

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INTRODUCTION.

It would be almost vain to attempt to say anything new in praise of the father of our English literature, Chaucer, "compared with whose productions, all that precedes is barbarism."[1] The object of the present Introduction is rather to put together a few remarks tending to illustrate his style and versification, leaving it to the diligence of the reader to form a just estimate of the great *moral* value of his poems, suffering, as they unquestionably do, under a freedom of language inseparable from the age in which he lived.

Praiseworthy attempts have been made by various writers of the present day to expurgate Chaucer, or, at all events, to select from his writings the noblest and most characteristic passages. This latter task has not only been done, but done well. The object of the editor of the present volume is a different one. He wishes merely to present a convenient, complete edition of the "Canterbury Tales," adopting Tyrwhitt's text, which, though far from perfect, is the only one which, in the existing state of our Chaucerian knowledge, can be safely followed. Considerable labour has, however, been bestowed in transferring the contents of Tyrwhitt's valuable glossary and notes to their proper places beneath the text. The comfort of the reader is so obviously concerned in this arrangement, that little need be said in its commendation. A few of the clever remarks in "Notes and Queries," and likewise some observations by the present editor, have been incorporated, and it is hoped that Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," *as a whole*, are now set before the English reader in a more popular and attractive form than has yet been attempted.

As in the case of the notes, so likewise it was necessary to condense the prefaces of Tyrwhitt, as well as to add certain remarks from more recent enthusiasts in behalf of Chaucer. But when it would be easy to say so much—when there is so much temptation to forestall the opinion of the

[1] Literature and Learning in England, by Geo. L. Craik, v. ii. p. 10.

reader, it is perhaps far better to leave him to drink uninterrupted draughts from this "well of English undefiled." It will therefore be well to commence with Tyrwhitt's important remarks on the language and versification of our author.

"The Language of Chaucer," it has been observed by this able editor, "has undergone two very different judgments. According to one,[1] he is the 'well of English undefiled;' according to the other,[2] he has corrupted and deformed the English idiom by an immoderate mixture of French words. Nor do the opinions with respect to his Versification seem to have been less discordant. His contemporaries, and they who lived nearest to his time, universally extoll him as the 'chief Poete of Britaine,' 'the flour of Poetes,' &c., titles which must be supposed to imply their admiration of his metrical skill, as well as of his other poetical talents; but the later critics, though they leave him in possession of the same sounding titles, yet they are almost unanimously agreed, that he was either totally ignorant or negligent of metrical rules, and that his verses, if they may be so called, are frequently deficient, by a syllable or two, of their just measure.

"Now, in order to judge, in the first place, how far Chaucer ought to be charged as the importer of the many French words and phrases, which are so visible in all his writings, it will be necessary to take a short view of the early introduction and long prevalency of the French language in this country before his time. It might be sufficient, perhaps, for our purpose, to begin this view at the Conquest: but I cannot help observing, from the testimony of Ingulphus, a contemporary Historian, that, several years before that great event, the language of France had been introduced into the court of England, and from thence among the people. Edward, commonly called the Confessor, had resided many years in Normandy, and upon his return to England in 1043, he brought over with him a number of Normans, whom he promoted to the highest dignities;

[1] *I. e.*, Spenser, F. Q. b. iv. c. ii. st. 32.

[2] *I. e.*, Verstegan, c. 7. "The Poet Geffery Chaucer is of some called the first illuminator of the English tongue. Of their opinion I am not, though I reverence Chaucer as an excellent poet for his time. He was indeed *a great mingler of English with* FRENCH, unto which language (by like for that he was descended of French, or rather Wallon race) he carried a great affection."

and under the influence of the King and his Norman favourites, the whole nation began to lay aside their English fashions and imitate the manners of the French in many things. In particular, Ingulphus says expressly, that *all the Nobility in their courts began to speak French, as a great piece of gentility.*

"This fashion, however, having been adopted only in compliance with the caprice of the reigning prince, would not probably have spread very wide or lasted very long; but at the Revolution, which followed soon after in 1066, the language of the Norman conqueror was interwoven with the new political system, and the several establishments which were made for the support and security of the one, all contributed, in a greater or less degree, to the diffusion and permanency of the other.

"If we consider that the King himself, the chief officers of state, and by far the greatest part of the nobility, were all Normans, and could probably speak no language but their own, we can have no doubt that French was the ordinary language of the court. The few Saxons, who for some time were admitted there, must have had the strongest inducements to acquire the same language as soon as possible, not merely for the sake of apprehending and answering insignificant questions in the circle, but because in that age affairs of the greatest importance were publickly transacted in the King's court, and there they might be called upon to answer for their possessions and even for their lives.

"If we consider further, that the great Barons, to whom William distributed a large share of his conquest, when released from their attendance in the King's court, retired to courts of their own, where they in their turn were surrounded by a numerous train of vassals, chiefly their own countrymen, we may be sure that the French language travelled with them into the most distant provinces, and was used by them, not only in their common conversation, but in their civil contracts, their judicial proceedings, and even in the promulgation of their laws. The many Castles which William built in different parts of the island, must also have contributed very much to the propagation of the French language among the natives, as it is probable that the Foreigners, of whom the garrisons were entirely composed, would insist upon carrying on all their transactions with the neighbouring country in their own languag s.

"But the great alteration which, from political motives, was made in the state of the clergy at that time, must have operated perhaps more efficaciously than any other cause to give the French language a deep root in England. The Conqueror seems to have been fully apprized of the strength which the new government might derive from a clergy more closely attached to himself by a community of interests than the native English were likely to be. Accordingly, from the very beginning of his reign, all ecclesiastical preferments, as fast as they became vacant, were given to his Norman chaplains; and, not content to avail himself of the ordinary course of succession, he contrived, upon various charges of real or pretended irregularities, to remove several of the English Bishops and Abbots, whose places were in like manner immediately supplied by Foreigners. In short, in the space of a very few years, all the Sees of England were filled with Normans, or strangers naturalized, if I may so say, in Normandy, and the greatest part of the Abbeys in the kingdom were under governours of the same description.

"It must be allowed, that the confessed superiority in literature of the Norman clergy over the English at that time furnished the King with a specious pretext for these promotions; and it is probable, that the Prelates, who were thus promoted, made use of the same pretext to justify themselves in disposing of all their best benefices among their friends and countrymen. That this was their constant practice is certain. And when the great Barons, following the royal example, applied themselves to make their peace with the Church by giving her a share of their plunder, it was their usual custom to begin their religious establishments with a colony from some Norman Monastery.

"In this state of things, which seems to have continued with little variation to the time of Edward III., it is probable that the French and English languages subsisted together throughout the kingdom; the higher orders, both of the Clergy and Laity, speaking almost universally French, the lower retaining the use of their native tongue, but also frequently adding to it a knowledge of the other. The general inducements which the English had to acquire the French language have been touched upon above; to which must be added, that the children, who were put to learn Latin, were under a necessity of learning French at the same time, as it was the constant practice in all schools.

from the Conquest till about the reign of Edward III., to make the scholars construe their Latin lessons into French. From the discontinuance of this practice, as well as from other causes, the use and, probably, the knowledge of French, as a separate language, received a considerable check.

"Hence I think we may fairly conclude, that the English language must have imbibed a strong tincture of the French, long before the age of Chaucer, and consequently that he ought not to be charged as the importer of words and phrases, which he only used after the example of his predecessors and in common with his contemporaries. This was the real fact, and is capable of being demonstrated to any one, who will take the trouble of comparing the writings of Chaucer with those of Robert of Gloucester and Robert of Brunne, who both lived before him, and with those of Sir John Mandeville and Wicliff, who lived at the same time with him. If we could for a moment suppose the contrary; if we could suppose that the English idiom, in the age of Chaucer, remained pure and unmixed, as it was spoken in the courts of Alfred or Egbert, and that the French was still a foreign, or at least a separate language; I would ask, whether it is credible, that a Poet, writing in English upon the most familiar subjects, would stuff his compositions with French words and phrases, which, upon the above supposition, must have been unintelligible to the greatest part of his readers; or, if he had been so very absurd, is it conceivable, that he should have immediately become, not only the most admired, but also the most popular writer of his time and country?

"Having thus," continues Tyrwhitt, "endeavoured to shew, in opposition to the ill-grounded censures of Verstegan and Skinner, that the corruption, or improvement, of the English language by a mixture of French was not originally owing to Chaucer, I shall proceed to make some observations upon the most material peculiarities of that Norman-Saxon dialect, which I suppose to have prevailed in the age of Chaucer, and which, in substance, remains to this day the language of England.

"By what means the French tongue was first introduced and propagated in this island has been sufficiently explained above; but to ascertain with any exactness the degrees, by which it insinuated itself and was ingrafted into the Saxon, would be a much more difficult task, for want of a regular series of the writings of approved authors transmitted to

us by authentic copies. Luckily for us, as our concern is solely with that period when the incorporation of the two languages was completed, it is of no great importance to determine the precise time at which any word or phrase became naturalized; and for the same reason, we have no need to enquire minutely, with respect to the other alterations, which the Saxon language in its several stages appears to have undergone, how far they proceeded from the natural mutability of human speech, especially among an unlearned people, and how far they were owing to a successive conflux of Danish and Norman invaders.[1]

"The following observations therefore will chiefly refer to the state in which the English language appears to have been about the time of Chaucer, and they will naturally divide themselves into two parts. The first will consider the remains of the antient Saxon mass, however defaced or disguised by various accidents; the second will endeavour to point out the nature and effects of the accessions, which, in the course of near three centuries, it had received from Normandy.

"For the sake of method it will be convenient to go through the several parts of speech in the order in which they are commonly ranged by Grammarians.

"1. The Prepositive Article ꝑe ꝑeo. þæt. (which answered to the ὁ, ἡ, τὸ, of the Greeks, in all its varieties of gender, case, and number,) had been long laid aside, and instead of it an indeclinable *the* was prefixed to all sorts of nouns, in all cases, and in both numbers.

"2. The Declensions of Substantives were reduced from six to one; and instead of a variety of cases in both numbers, they had only a Genitive case singular, which was uniformly deduced from the Nominative by adding to it *es;* or only *s*, if it ended in an *e* feminine; and that same form was used to express the Plural[2] number in all its cases: as,

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[1] We must observe, that Tyrwhitt's views both on this and on other matters contained in this preface, have received considerable correction both in "Notes and Queries," and more especially in Dr. Nott's "Dissertation on the State of English Poetry before the Sixteenth Century," 4to, London, 1815; Guest (History of English Rhythmes, 1. 26). and in Craik's Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England, v. ii. (Knight's Weekly Vols.), to which, especially the latter, we refer our readers.—ED.

[2] It is scarcely necessary to take notice of a few plurals, which were expressed differently, though their number was greater in the time of Chaucer than it is now. Some of them seem to retain their termi-

Nom. *Shour*, Gen. *Shoures*, Plur. *Shoures*. Nom. *Name*, Gen. *Names*, Plur. *Names*.

"The Nouns Adjective had lost all distinction of Gender, Case, or Number.

"3. The Primitive Pronouns retained one oblique case in each number: as, *Ic*, or *I*; *We*: Obl. *Me*; *Us*:—*Thou*; *Ye*: Obl. *Thee*; *You*.—*He*, *She*; *Hi*,[1] or *They*: Obl. *Him*, *Hire*; *Hem*, or *Them*.

"Their Possessives were in the same state with the Adjectives; *Min*, *Thin*, *His*, *Hire*; *Oure*, *Youre*, *Hir*, *or Their*.[2]

"The Interrogative and Relative *Who* had a Genitive and Accusative case, *Whos*, and *Whom*, but no variety of Number.

"On the contrary, the Demonstrative, *This*, and *That*, had a Plural expression, *Thise*, and *Tho*, but no variety of case.

"The other words, which are often, though improperly, placed in the class of Pronouns, were all become undeclined, like the Adjectives; except, *Eyther*, alteruter;

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nation in *en* from the second declension of the Saxons; as, oxen, eyen, hosen, &c. Others seem to have adopted it *euphoniæ gratiâ*; as, brethren, eyren.

[1] It is very difficult to say from whence, or why, the pronouns, *They*, *Them*, and *Their*, were introduced into our language. The Saxon pronouns, *Hi*, *Hem*, and *Hir*, seem to have been in constant use in the time of Robert of Gloucester. Sir John Mandeville and Chaucer use *They*, for *Hi*; but never, as I remember (in the MSS. of authority), *Them*, or *Their*.

[2] The four last of these possessive pronouns were sometimes expressed a little differently—viz., *Hires*, *Oures*, *Youres*, and *Hirs*, or *Theirs*; as they are still, when the noun to which they belong is understood, or when they are placed after it in a sentence. To the question, Whose book is this? we answer, *Hers*, *Ours*, *Yours*, or *Theirs*: or we declare; This book is *Hers*, *Ours*, &c. I can hardly conceive that the final *s* in these words is a mark of the possessive (or genitive) case, as a very able writer [Short Introduction to English Grammar, p. 35, 6] seems to be inclined to think; because in the instances just mentioned, and in all which I have been able to find or to imagine, I cannot discover the least trace of the usual powers of the genitive case. The learned Wallis [Gram. Ang. c. 7.] has explained the use of these pronouns without attempting to account for their form. He only adds; "Nonnulli *hern*, *ourn*, *yourn*, *hisn*, dicunt, pro *hers*, *ours*, &c. sed barbarè, nec quisquam (credo) sic scribere solet." If it could be proved that these words were antiently terminated in *n*, we might be led to conjecture that they were originally abbreviations of *her own*, *our own*, &c., the *n* being afterwards softened into *s*, as it has been in many other words.

Neyther, neuter; *Other*, alter; which had a Genitive case Singular, *Eytheres*, *Neytheres*, *Otheres*: *Other*, alius, had a Genitive case singular, and a Plural number, *Otheres*; and *Aller* (a corruption of ealpa) was still in use, as the Genitive Plural of *Alle*.[1]

"4. The Verbs, at the time of which we are treating, were very nearly reduced to the simple state in which they are at present.

"They had four Modes, as now; the Indicative, the Imperative, the Subjunctive, and the Infinitive; and only two expressions of Time, the Present and the Past. All the other varieties of Mode and Time were expressed by Auxiliary Verbs.

"In the inflexions of their Verbs, they differed very little from us in the singular number: *I love*, *Thou lovest*, *He loveth*: but in the Plural they were not agreed among themselves; some adhering to the old Saxon form; *We loveth*, *Ye loveth*, *They loveth*; and others adopting, what

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[1] It may be proper here to take a little notice of the pronoun, or pronominal adjective, *Self*, which our best grammarians, from Wallis downwards, have attempted to metamorphose into a substantive. In the Saxon language, it is certain that *Sylf* was declined, like other adjectives, and was joined in construction with pronouns personal and substantives, just as *ipse* is in Latin. They said, Ic sylf, Ego ipse; Min sylfes, mei ipsius; Me sylfne, me ipsum, &c. Petrus sylf, Petrus ipse, &c. [See Hickes, Gr. A. S. p. 26.] In the age of Chaucer, *Self*, like other adjectives, was become undeclined. Though he writes, *Self*, *Selre*, and *Selren*, those varieties do not denote any distinction of case or number; for he uses indifferently, *himself* and *himselven*; *hemself* and *hemselren*. He joins it with substantives, in the sense of *ipse*, as the Saxons did. [See v. 2862. In that *selre* grove. In illo ipso nemore. v. 4535. Thy *selve* neighebour. Ipse tuus vicinus.] But his great departure from the antient usage was with respect to the pronouns personal prefixed to *Self*. Instead of declining them through the cases which they still retained, he uses constantly, Myself, for, I self, and, Me self; Thyself, for, Thou self, and, Thee self; Him self and Hire self, for He self and She self; and in the plural number, Our self, for, We self, and Us self; Your self, for, Ye self, and You self; and Hem self, for They self.

By degrees a custom was introduced of annexing *Self* to Pronouns in the Singular number only, and *Selves* (a corruption, I suppose, of *Selven*) to those in the Plural. This probably contributed to persuade our late Grammarians that *Self* was a Substantive; as the true English Adjective does not vary in the Plural number. Another cause of their mistake might be, that they considered *my*, *thy*, *our*, *your*, to which *self* is usually joined, as Pronouns *Possessive*; whereas I think it more probable that they were the Saxon Genitive cases of the *Personal* pronouns.

seems to have been, the Teutonic; *We loven, Ye loven, They loven.* In the Plural of the Past Tense the latter form prevailed universally: I loved, thou lovedest, he loved; *We loveden, Ye loveden, They loveden.*

"The second person Plural in the Imperative Mode regularly terminated in *eth;* as, *Loveth* ye; though the final consonants, according to the genius of the language, were frequently omitted, especially in verse.

"The Saxon termination of the Infinitive in *an* had been long changed into *en; to loven, to liven,* &c., and they were beginning to drop the *n; to love, to live.*

"The Participle of the Present Time began to be generally terminated in *ing;* as, *loving:* though the old form, which terminated in *ende,* or *ande,* was still in use; as, *lovende,* or *lovande.* The Participle of the Past time continued to be formed, as the Past time itself was, in *ed;* as, *loved;* or in some contraction of *ed;*[1] except among the irregular

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[1] The methods, by which the final *ed* of the Past Tense and its Participle was contracted or abbreviated, in the age of Chaucer, were chiefly the following:

1. By throwing away the *d*, as in Verbs, whose last Consonant was *t*, preceded by a Consonant. Thus, *caste, coste, hurte, putte, slitte,* were used instead of, *casted, costed, hurted, putted, slitted.*

2. By transposing the *d*, which was very generally done in Verbs, whose last Consonant was *d*, preceded by a Vowel. Thus, instead of *reded, leded, spreded, bleded, feded,* it was usual to write, *redde, ledde, spredde, bledde, fedde.*—And this same method of transposition, I apprehend, was originally applied to shorten those words which we now contract by Syncope; as, *lov'd, liv'd, smil'd, hear'd, fear'd,* which were anciently written, *lorde, livde, smilde, herde, ferde.*

3. By transposing the *d* and changing it into *t*, which method was used, 1. in Verbs, whose last Consonant was *t*, preceded by a Vowel. Thus, *leted, sweted, meted,* were changed into *lette, swette, mette.*—2. In Verbs, whose last Consonant was *d* preceded by a Consonant. Thus, *bended, bilded, girded,* were changed into *bente, bilte, girte.*—And generally, in Verbs, in which *d* is changed into *t*, I conceive that *d* was first transposed; so that *dwelled, passed, dremed, feled, keped,* should be supposed to have been first changed into, *dwellde, passde, dremde, felde, kepde,* and then into, *dwelte, paste, dremte, felte, kepte.*

4. The last method, together with a change of the radical vowel, will account for the analogy of a species of Verbs, generally reputed anomalous, which form their Past Time and its Participle, according to modern orthography, in *ght.* The process seems to have been thus. *Bring, bringed, brongde, brogde, brogte; Think, thinked, thonkde, thokde, thokte; Teche, teched, tachde, tachte,* &c. Only *fought,* from *fighted,* seems to have been formed, by throwing away the *d* (according to method 1) and changing the radical vowel. See instances of similar contractions in the Francic language. Hickes, Gramm. Fr. Th. p. 66.

Verbs, where for the most part it terminated in *en;* as, *bounden, founden.*

"The greatest part of the Auxiliary Verbs were only in use in the Present and Past Tenses of their Indicative and Subjunctive Modes. They were inflected in those tenses like other Verbs, and were prefixed to the Infinitive Mode of the Verb to which they were Auxiliary. I *shall* loven; I *will*, or *woll*, loven; I *may*, or *mow*, loven; I *can*, or *con*, loven, &c. We *shullen* loven; We *willen*, or *wollen*, loven; We *mowen* loven; We *connen* loven, &c. In the Past tense, I *shulde*[1] loven; I *wolde* loven; I *mighte*, or *moughte* loven; I *coude* loven, &c. We *shulden*, we *wolden*, we *mighten*, or *moughten*, we *couden* loven, &c.

"The Auxiliary *To Haven* was a complete Verb, and, being prefixed to the Participle of the Past time, was used to express the Preterperfect and Preterpluperfect Tenses. I *have* loved, Thou *havest*, or *hast* loved, He *haveth*, or *hath* loved; We *haven*, or *han* loved. &c. I *hadde* loved, thou *haddest* loved. he *hadde* loved; We, ye, they, *hadden* loved.

"The Auxiliary *To ben* was also a complete Verb, and being prefixed to the Participle of the Past time, with the help of the other Auxiliary Verbs, supplied the place of the whole Passive voice, for which the Saxon language had no other form of expression. I *am*, thou *art*, he *is* loved; We, ye, they, *aren*, or *ben* loved. I *was*, thou *wast*, he *was* loved; We, ye, they, *weren* loved.

"5. With respect to the indeclinable parts of Speech, it will be sufficient to observe here, that many of them still remained pure Saxon: the greatest number had undergone a slight change of a letter or two; and the more considerable alterations, by which some had been disfigured, were fairly deducible from that propensity to abbreviation, for which the inhabitants of this island have been long remarkable, though perhaps not more justly so than their neighbours.

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[1] *Shulde* and *Wolde* are contracted from *Shulled* and *Wolled*, by transposing the *d*, according to method 2.

Mighte and *Moughte* are formed from *maghed* and *moghed*, according to method 3. *Maghed, maghde, maghte; Moghed, moghde, moghte.*

Coude is from *conned*, by transposition of the *d*, and softening the *n* into *u*. It is often written *couthe*, and always so, I believe, when it is used as a Participle. In the same manner Bishop Douglas, and other Scotish writers, use *Begouth* as the Præterit of *Begin*. *Begonned, begonde, begoude, begouthe.*

"Such was, in general, the state of the Saxon part of the English language when Chaucer began to write: let us now take a short view of the accessions which it may be supposed to have received at different times from Normandy.

"As the language of our Ancestors was complete in all its parts, and had served them for the purposes of discourse and even of composition in various kinds, long before they had any intimate acquaintance with their French neighbours, they had no call from necessity, and consequently no sufficient inducement, to alter its original and radical constitutions, or even its customary forms.[1] Accordingly, we have just seen, that, in all the essential parts of Speech, the characteristical features of the Saxon idiom were always preserved; and we shall see presently, that the crowds of French words, which from time to time were imported, were themselves made subject, either immediately or by degrees, to the laws of that same idiom.

"The words, which were thus imported, were chiefly Nouns Substantive, Adjectives, Verbs, and Participles. The Adverbs, which are derived from French Adjectives, seem to have been formed from them after they were Anglicised, as they have all the Saxon termination *lich* or *ly*,[2] instead of the French *ment*. As to the other indeclinable parts of Speech, our language, being sufficiently rich in its own stores, has borrowed nothing from France, except perhaps an Interjection or two.

"The Nouns Substantive in the French language (as in all the other languages derived from the Latin) had lost their Cases long before the time of which we are treating; but such of them as were naturalised here, seem all to have acquired a Genitive case, according to the corrupted Saxon form, which has been stated above. Their Plural number was also new modelled to the same form, if necessary; for in Nouns ending in *e* feminine, as the greater part of the French did, the two languages were already agreed. Nom. *Flour*. Gen. *Floures*. Plur. *Floures*. Nom. *Dame*. Gen. *Dames*. Plur. *Dames*.

"On the contrary, the Adjectives, which at home had a

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[1] Nevertheless, as Craik observes (Lit. of Engl. ii. p. 10), "compared with Chaucer's productions, all that precedes is barbarism."—ED.

[2] As *rarely*, *continually*, *verily*, *bravely*, &c., which correspond to the French adverbs, rarement, continuellement, veraiment, bravement, &c.

distinction of Gender and Number, upon their naturalisation here, seem to have been generally stript of both, and reduced to the simple state of the English Adjective, without Case, Gender, or Number.

"The French Verbs were obliged to lay aside all their differences of Conjugation. *Accorder, souffrir, recevoir, descendre,* were regularly changed into—*accorden, suffren, receiven, descenden.* They brought with them only two Tenses, the Present and the Past; nor did they retain any singularity of Inflexion, which could distinguish them from other Verbs of Saxon growth.

"The Participle indeed of the Present time, in some Verbs, appears to have still preserved its original French form; as. *usant, suffisant,* &c.

"The Participle of the Past time adopted, almost universally, the regular Saxon termination in *ed;* as *accorded, suffred, received, descended.* It even frequently assumed the prepositive particle ȝe. (or y, as it was latterly written,) which, among the Saxons, was very generally, though not peculiarly, prefixed to that Participle.

"Upon the whole," concludes Tyrwhitt, "I believe it may be said with truth, that, at the time which we are considering, though the form of our Language was still Saxon, the matter was in a great measure French. The novelties of all kinds which the Revolution in 1066 had introduced, demanded a large supply of new terms; and our Ancestors very naturally took what they wanted from the Language which was already familiar to a considerable part of the community. Our poets in particular, who have generally the principal share in modelling a Language, found it their interest to borrow as many words as they conveniently could from France. As they were for a long time chiefly Translators, this expedient saved them the trouble of hunting for correspondent terms in Saxon. The French words too, being the remains of a polished language, were smoother, and slid easier into metre than the Saxon, which had never undergone any regular cultivation: their final syllables chimed together with more frequent consonancies, and their Accents were better adapted to Riming Poetry.

ON THE VERSIFICATION OF CHAUCER.

"That the Saxons had a species of writing, which differed from their common prose, and was considered by themselves as Poetry, is very certain; but it seems equally certain, that their compositions of that kind were neither divided into verses of a determinate number of syllables, nor embellished with what we call Rime. There are no traces, I believe, to be found of either Rhyme or Metre in our language, till some years after the conquest; so that I should apprehend we must have been obliged for both to the Normans, who very early distinguished themselves by poetical performances in the vulgar tongue.

"Their metres, which we seem to have borrowed from them, were plainly copied from the Latin rhythmical verses, which, in the declension of that language, were current in various forms among those, who either did not understand, or did not regard, the true quantity of syllables; and the practice of rhyming is probably to be derived from the same original.

"Although proofs are not wanting that the art of Riming was not unknown or unpractised in this country in the time of Henry II., it may seem extraordinary that we should be obliged to search through a space of above an hundred years, without being able to meet with a single maker of English Rimes, whom we know to have written in that interval. The case I suspect to have been this. The scholars of that age (and there were many who might fairly be called so, in the English dominions abroad as well as at home) affected to write only in Latin, so that we do not find that they ever composed, in verse or prose, in any other language. On the other hand, they, who meant to recommend themselves by their Poetry to the favour of the great, took care to write in French, the only language which their patrons understood; and hence it is, that we see many French poems, about that time, either addressed directly to the principal persons at the English court, or at least written on such subjects as we may suppose to have been most likely to engage their attention. Whatever therefore of English Poetry was produced, in this infancy of the art, being probably the work of illiterate authors,

and circulating only among the vulgar, we need not be much surprised that more of it has not been transmitted down to posterity.

"The learned Hickes, however, has pointed out to us two very curious pieces, which may with probability be referred to this period. The first of them is a Paraphrase of the Gospel Histories, entitled *Ormulum*, by one *Orm*, or *Ormin*. It seems to have been considered as mere Prose, by Hickes and by Wanley; but, I apprehend, every reader who has an ear for metre will easily perceive that it is written very exactly in verses of fifteen syllables, without Rime, in imitation of the most common species of the Latin Tetrameter Iambic. The other piece, which is a moral Poem upon old age, &c., is in Rime, and in a metre much resembling the former, except that the verse of fifteen syllables is broken into two, of which the first should regularly contain eight and the second seven syllables; but the metre is not so exactly observed, at least in the copy which Hickes has followed, as it is in the *Ormulum*.

"In the next interval, from the latter end of the reign of Henry III. to the middle of the fourteenth century, when we may suppose Chaucer was beginning to write, the number of English Rimers seems to have increased very much. Besides several, whose names we know, it is probable that a great part of the anonymous authors, or rather translators of the popular poems, which (from their having been originally written in the Roman or French language) were called romances, flourished about this time. It is unnecessary to enter into particulars here concerning any of them, as they do not appear to have invented, or imported from abroad, any new modes of Versification, by which the Art could be at all advanced, or even to have improved those which were before in use. On the contrary, as their works were intended for the ear more than for the eye, to be recited rather than read, they were apt to be more attentive to their Rimes than to the exactness of their Metres, from a presumption, I suppose, that the defect, or redundance, of a syllable, might be easily covered in the recitation, especially if accompanied, as it often was, by some musical instrument.

"Such was, in general, the state of English Poetry at the time when Chaucer probably made his first essays. The use of Rime was established; not exclusively (for the Author of the "Visions of Pierce Ploughman" wrote after

the year 1350[1] without Rime,) but very generally; so that in this respect he had little to do but to imitate his predecessors. The Metrical part of our Poetry was capable of more improvement, by the polishing of the measures already in use as well as by the introducing of new modes of versification; and how far Chaucer actually contributed to the improvement of it, in both or either of these particulars, we are now to consider.

"With respect to the regular Metres then in use, they may be reduced, I think, to four. First, the long Iambic Metre, consisting of not more than 15, nor less than 14 syllables, and broken by a *Cæsura* at the eighth syllable. Secondly, the Alexandrian, consisting of not more than 13 syllables, nor less than 12, with a *Cæsura* at the sixth. Thirdly, the Octosyllable, which was in reality the ancient Dimeter Iambic. Fourthly, the Stanza of 6 verses; of which the first, second, fourth, and fifth, were in the complete Octosyllable Metre; and the third and last catalectic, *i.e.*, wanting a syllable, or even two.

"In the first of these Metres it does not appear that Chaucer ever composed at all, (for, I presume, no one can imagine that he was the author of Gamelyn.) or in the second; and in the fourth we have nothing of his but the Rime of Sire Thopas, which, being intended to ridicule the vulgar Romancers, seems to have been purposely written in their favourite Metre. In the third, or Octosyllable, he has left several compositions; particularly an imperfect translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, which was, probably, one of his earliest performances: 'the House of Fame;' 'the Dethe of the Duchesse Blanche,' and a poem called his 'Dreme:' upon all which it will be sufficient here to observe in general, that if he had given no other proofs of his poetical faculty, these alone must have secured to him the pre-eminence, above all his predecessors and contemporaries, in point of Versification.

"But by far the most considerable part of Chaucer's

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[1] This is plain from fol. 68. edit. 1550, where the year 1350 is named as a year of great scarcity. Indeed, from the mention of the Kitten in the tale of the Rattons, fol. iii. iv., I should suspect that the author wrote at the very end of the reign of Edward III., when Richard was become heir apparent.

The Visions *of* (i. e., *concerning*) Pierce Ploughman are generally ascribed to one *Robert Langland;* but the best MSS. that I have seen, make the Christian name of the author *William*, without mentioning his surname.

works is written in that kind of Metre which we now call the Heroic;[1] either in Distichs or in Stanzas; and as I have not been able to discover any instance of this metre being used by any English poet before him, I am much inclined to suppose that he was the first introducer of it into our language. It had long been practised in France, in the Northern as well as the Southern provinces; and in Italy, within the last fifty years before Chaucer wrote, it had been cultivated with the greatest assiduity and success, in preference to every other metre, by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace. When we reflect that two of Chaucer's juvenile productions, the Palamon and Arcite, and the Troilus, were in a manner translated from the *Theseida* and the *Filostrato* of Boccace,[2] both written in the common Italian hendecasyllable verse, it cannot but appear extremely probable that his metre also was copied from the same original; and yet I cannot find that the form of his Stanza in the Troilus, consisting of seven verses, was ever used by Boccace, though it is to be met with among the poems of the King of Navarre, and of the *Provençal* Rimers. Whichever he shall be supposed to have followed, whether the French or Italians, it is certain

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[1] The Heroic Metre with us, as with the Italians, is of the Iambic form, and consists of ten, eleven, or twelve syllables; the tenth, however, being in all cases the last accented syllable. The French have the same Metre; but with them it can scarce contain more than eleven syllables, as their language has few (if any) words, in which the accent is laid upon the Antepenultima. Though we have a great number of such words, we seldom use the verse of twelve syllables. The extraordinary difficulty of riming with three syllables is a sufficient reason for excluding it from all works which are written in Rime, and in Blank Metre the two unaccented syllables at the end make the close of the verse heavy and languid. Milton, for the sake of variety of measure, has inserted a very few of these verses, which the Italians call *Sdruccioli*, in his heroic poems; but they are more commonly and, I think, more properly employed in Dramatic compositions, where a continued stateliness of numbers is less requisite.

The generical name for this Metre in Italy is *Endecasyllabo;* and the verses of ten and twelve syllables are distinguished by additions; the former being called *Endecasyllabo tronco*, and the latter *Endecasyllabo sdrucciolo*. This proves, I think, that the verse of eleven syllables was the primitive metre, and principally used, as it still is, in Italy; and it will appear hereafter, if I am not mistaken, that the greatest part of Chaucer's heroic verses, when properly written and pronounced, are in this measure.

[2] This fact is however disputed by Nott. Dissert. on the State of Engl. Poetry before the 16th century, p. cclxxiv.—Ed.

that he could not want in either language a number of models of correct and harmonious versification; and the only question will be, whether he had ability and industry enough to imitate that part of their excellency.

"In discussing this question we should always have in mind, that the correctness and harmony of an English verse depends entirely upon its being composed of a certain number of syllables, and its having the accents of those syllables properly placed. In order therefore to form any judgment of the Versification of Chaucer, it is necessary that we should know the syllabical value, if I may use the expression, of his words, and the accentual value of his syllables, as they were commonly pronounced in his time; for without that knowledge, it is not more probable that we should determine justly upon the exactness of his metres, than that we should be able to cast up rightly an account stated in coins of a former age, of whose current rates and denominations we are totally ignorant.

"Now the great number of verses, sounding complete even to our ears, which is to be found in all the least corrected copies of Chaucer's works, authorises us to conclude, that he was not ignorant of the laws of metre. Upon this conclusion it is impossible not to ground a strong presumption, that he intended to observe the same laws in the many other verses which seem to us irregular; and if this was really his intention, what reason can be assigned sufficient to account for his having failed so grossly and repeatedly, as is generally supposed, in an operation, which every Balladmonger in our days, man, woman, or child, is known to perform with the most unerring exactness, and without any extraordinary fatigue?

"The offences against metre in an English verse, as has partly been observed before, must arise either from a superfluity or deficiency of syllables, or from the accents being improperly placed.

"With respect to the first species of irregularity, I have not taken notice of any superfluities in Chaucer's verses, but what may be reduced to just measure by the usual practices[1] of even modern Poets. And this, by the way, is

[1] It is unnecessary to trouble the Reader with an enumeration of Syncope, Apostrophius, Synecphonesis, &c,

Quicquid habent telorum armamentaria vatum.

They may all, I think, be comprehended in our language under this one

a strong proof of his real attention to metrical rules; for otherwise, if he had written without any restraint of that kind, a certain proportion of his deviations from measure must, in all probability, have been on the side of excess.

"But a great number of Chaucer's verses labour under an apparent deficiency of a syllable, or two. In some of these perhaps the defect may still be supplied from MSS., but for the greatest part I am persuaded no such assistance is to be expected; and therefore, supposing the text in these cases to be correct, it is worth considering whether the verse also may not be made correct, by adopting in certain words a pronunciation, different indeed from modern practice, but which, we have reason to believe, was used by the author himself.

"For instance, in the Genitive case Singular and the Plural Number of Nouns (which, as has been remarked above, in the time of Chaucer had the same expression), there can be no doubt that such words as, *shoures*, ver. 1, *croppes*, ver. 7, *shires*, ver. 15, *lordes*, ver. 47, &c., were regularly pronounced as consisting of two syllables. Whenever they are used as monosyllables, it must be considered as a Poetical Licence, warranted however even then (as we may presume from the natural progress of our language) by the practice of inaccurate speakers in common conversation.

"In like manner, we may be sure that *ed*, the regular termination of the Past Tense and its Participle, made, or contributed to make, a second syllable in the words *perced*, ver. 2, *bathed*, ver. 3, *loved*, ver. 45, *wered*, ver. 7[illegible], &c. The first step toward reducing words of this form to Monosyllables seems to have been to shorten the last syllable, either by transposing the final letters, as in—*wold*, ver. 144, *sayde*, ver. 763, &c., or by throwing away the

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general principle, that an English verse, though chiefly composed feet of two syllables, is capable of receiving feet of three syllables every part of it, provided only one of the three syllables be accented

In short, whoever can taste the metrical harmony of the follow lines of Milton, will not be embarrassed how to dispose of the (se ingly) superfluous, syllables, which he may meet with in Chaucer.

P. L. ii. 123. Ominous | conjecture on the whole success.
302. A pil | lar of state | ; deep on his front engraven—
658. Celestial spir | its in bón | dage, nor the abyss—
v. 495. No inconvenient di | et, nor too | light fare.
vii. 122. Things not revealed, which the invis | ible King—

as in—*coste*, ver. 1910, *caste*, ver. 2083, &c. In both these cases the words still remained of two syllables, the final *e* being sounded as an *e* feminine; but they were prepared to lose their last syllable by the easy licence of changing an *e* feminine into an *e* mute, or of dropping it entirely, according to the modern practice.

"But nothing will be found of such extensive use for supplying the deficiencies of Chaucer's metre as the pronunciation of the *e* feminine; and as that pronunciation has been for a long time totally antiquated, it may be proper here to suggest some reasons for believing (independently of any arguments to be drawn from the practice of Chaucer himself) that the final *e* in our antient language was very generally pronounced, as the *e* feminine is at this day by the French.

"With respect to words imported directly from France, it is certainly quite natural to suppose, that, for some time, they retained their native pronunciation; whether they were Nouns substantive, as, *hoste*, ver. 753, *face*, ver. 1580, &c.—or Adjectives, as, *large*, ver. 755, *strange*, ver. 13, &c.—or Verbs, as, *grante*, ver. 12756, *preche*, ver. 12327, &c., and it cannot be doubted, that in these and other similar words in the French language, the final *e* was always pronounced, as it still is, so as to make them dissyllables.

"We have not indeed so clear a proof of the original pronunciation of the Saxon part of our language, owing to our not possessing any of their metrical compositions; but we know, from general observation, that all changes of pronunciation are usually made by small degrees; and therefore, when we find that a great number of those words, which in Chaucer's time ended in *e*, originally ended in *a*, we may reasonably presume, that our ancestors first passed from the broader sound of *a* to the thinner sound of *e* feminine, and not at once from *a* to *e* mute. Besides, if the final *e* in such words was not pronounced, why was it added? From the time that it has confessedly ceased to be pronounced it has been gradually omitted in them, except where it may be supposed of use to lengthen or soften[1] the preceding syllable, as in—*hope*, *name*, &c.

[1] In most of the words in which the final *e* has been omitted, its use in lengthening or softening the preceding syllable has been supplied by an alteration in the Orthography of that Syllable. Thus, in—*grete*,

But according to the ancient orthography it terminates many words of Saxon original, where it cannot have been added for any such purpose, as, *herte*, *childe*, *olde*, *wilde*, &c. In these therefore we must suppose that it was pronounced as an *e* feminine, and made part of a second syllable; and so, by a parity of reason, in all others, in which, as in these, it appears to have been substituted for the Saxon *a*.

"Upon the same grounds we may presume, that in words terminated, according to the Saxon form, in *en*, such as the Infinitive modes and Plural numbers of Verbs, and a great variety of Adverbs and Prepositions, the *n* only was at first thrown away, and the *e*, which then became final, continued for a long time to be pronounced as well as written.

"These considerations seem sufficient to make us believe that the pronunciation of the *e* feminine is founded on the very nature of both the French and Saxon parts of our language; and therefore, though we may not be able to trace the reasons of that pronunciation in all cases so plainly as in those which have been just mentioned, we may safely, I think, conclude with the learned Wallis, that what is generally considered as an *e* mute in our language, either at the end or in the middle of words, was anciently pronounced, but obscurely, like the *e* feminine of the French.

"The third kind of irregularity, to which an English verse is liable, is from the accents being misplaced. The restoring of Chaucer's words to their just number of syllables, by the methods which have been pointed out above will often be of signal service in restoring his accents also to their proper places: but further, in many words, we must be cautious of concluding too hastily that Chaucer accented the same syllables that we do. On the contrary, I am persuaded that in his French words he most commonly laid his accent according to the French custom (upon the *last* syllable, or the *last but one* in words ending in *e* feminine which, as is well known, is the very reverse of our practice

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mete, *stele*, *rede*, *dere*,—in which the first *e* was originally long, as close a syllable, it has (since they have been pronounced as Monosyllables) been changed either into *ea*, as in—*great*, *meat*, *steal*, *read*, *dear*; or into *ee*, as in—*greet*, *meet*, *steel*, *reed*, *deer*. In like manner the *o* in—*hole*; *dore*, *gode*, *mone*, has been changed either into *oa*, as in—*boat*, *coat*, or into *oo*, as in—*door*, *good*, *moon*.

Thus in ver. 3, he uses *licoûr* for *liquour;* ver. 11, *corâges* for *coûrages;* ver. 22, again, *corâge* for *coûrage;* ver. 37, *reśon* for *réason;* ver. 77, *viâge* for *vóyage;* ver. 109, 10, *visâge—usâge* for *visage—úsage;* ver. 140, *manêre* for *mânner;* ver. 186, *laboûre* for *lâbour;* ver. 204, *prelât* for *prêlate;* ver. 211, *langâge* for *lânguage;* ver. 212, *mariâge* for *mârriage;* ver. 216, *contrée* for *coûntry;* and so through the whole work.

"In the same manner he accents the last Syllable of the Participle Present, as, ver. 885, 6. *wedding—coming* for *wêdding—cóming;* ver. 903. *living* for *living;* ver. 907, 8. *coming—crying* for *cóming—crýing;* ver. 998. *brenning* for *brênning*, &c., and as he does this in words of Saxon as well as of French growth, I should suppose that the old Participle of the present tense, ending in *and*, was originally accented upon that syllable, as it certainly continued to be by the Scottish Poets a long time after Chaucer.

"These instances are all taken from the Riming syllables (where a strong accent is indispensably necessary) in order to prove beyond contradiction, that Chaucer frequently accented his words in the French manner. But if he followed this practice at the end of his verses, it is more than probable that he did the same in the middle, whenever it gave a more harmonious flow to his metre; and therefore in ver. 4. instead of *vértue*, I suppose he pronounced, *vertûe;* in ver. 11. instead of *núture, nature;* in ver. 25. instead of *avénture, aventûre;* in ver. 46. instead of *hónour, honoûr*, &c.

"It may be proper however to observe, that we are not to expect from Chaucer that regularity in the disposition of his accents, which the practice of our greatest Poets in the last and the present century has taught us to consider as essential to harmonious versification. None of his masters, either French or Italian, had set him a pattern of exactness in this respect; and it is rather surprising, that, without rule or example to guide him, he has so seldom failed to place his accents in such a manner, as to produce the cadence best suited to the nature of his verse.

"I shall conclude this long and (I fear) tedious Essay, with a Grammatical and Metrical Analysis of the first eighteen lines of the Canterbury Tales. This will afford me an opportunity of illustrating at once a considerable part of that Theory, which I have ventured to propose in the preceding pages, with regard to the Language and Versification of Chaucer.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

I. [1]*Whânne* that Ápril with his [2]*shoûres* [3]*sóte*
II. The droúghte of Márch hath [1]*pérced* tó the [2]*róte*,
III. And [1]*bâthed* every véine in [2]*swîche* [3]*licoûr*,
IV. Of whîche [1]*vertûe* engéndred ís the floúr;
V. Whan Zéphirús eke with his [1] *sóte* bréthe
VI. [1]*Enspîred* háth in every hólt and héthe
VII. The téndre [1]*cróppes*, and the [2]*yónge* sónne,
VIII. Háth in the Rám his [1]*hálfe* coúrs [2]*yrónne*,

I. 1. *Whanne*, SAX. Hpænne, is so seldom used as a *Dissyllable* by Chaucer, that for some time I had great doubts about the true reading of this line. I now believe that it is right, as here printed, and that the same word is to be pronounced as a *Dissyllable* in ver. 703.

But with these relikes *whanne* that he fond—

Thanne, a word of the same form, occurs more frequently as a *Dissyllable*. See ver. 12260, 12506, 12721, 13924, 15282.

2. *Shoures*, Dis. *Plural number.* 3. *Sote*. See ver. v.

II. 1. *Perced*, Dis. *Participle of the Past Time.* 2. *Rote;* root.

III. 1. *Bathed*, Dis. See II. 1.—2. *Swiche*, such; from *Swilke*, SAX.—3. *licoûr*, FR. has the accent upon the *last* syllable, after the Frenc mode.

IV. 1. *Vertûe*, FR. may be accented in the same manner. There another way of preserving the harmony of this verse, by making *whiche* (from *whilke*, SAX.) a *Dissyllable*. See ver. 1014, 3921, 5488, 653 *Vertue* may then be pronounced, as it is now, with the accent on t *first;* the second syllable being incorporated with the first of *engendre*

V. 1. *Sote, swote, swete;* sweet, Dis. See ver. 3219, 3699, 3724, 37 3790.

VI. 1. *Enspired*, Tris. *Part. of Past Time.*

VII. 1. *Croppes*, Dis. *Pl. N.* as *shoures*. I. 2.—2. *Yonge*, Dis. See 213, 666, 1013, 3233, 73. It is used as a *Dissyllable* in the *Ormul* Col 230.

That wás god bísne fúl i wís till úre *yúnge* génge.

Stronge and *Longe* are pronounced in the same manner. See ver. 2 2640, 6, 3069, 3438, 3682.

VIII. 1. *Halfe*, or *Halve*, Dis. The original word is *Halfen*. So S from *Selfen*, is a *Dissyllable*, ver. 2862, 4535.

2 *Yronne;* Run. *Part. of the Past Time*, with the Saxon prepos particle ge, which in the Mss. of Chaucer is universally expressed or *i*. In this Edition, for the sake of perspicuity, *y* only is used.

IX. And [1]*smâle* [2]*foúles* [3]*mâken* mélodíe,
X. That [1]*slêpen* [2]*âlle* níght with ópen eýe,
XI. So príketh [1]*hêm* [2]*natûre* in [3]*hîr* [4]*coráges;*
XII. Than [1]*lóngen* fólk to [2]*gón* on pílgrimáges,
XIII. And [1]*pálmer'es* fór to [2]*séken* [3]*stránge* stróndes,
XIV. To [1]*sérve* [2]*hâlwes* [3]*coûthe* in sóndry lóndes;

IX. 1. *Smale*, Dis. See ver. 146, 2078, 6897, 10207.—2. *Foules*, Dis. as *Shoures*. I. 2.—3. *Maken;* make. *Plural Number of the Present Tense.*

X. 1. *Slepen*, as *Maken*. IX. 3.—2. *Alle*, Dis. See ver. 76, 348, 536, 1854, 2102.

XI. 1. *Hem;* Them. It is constantly used so by Chaucer. 2. *Nature* should perhaps be accented on the *last* syllable (or rather the *last but one*, supposing it a *Trisyllable*), after the French manner, though in the present case the verse will be sufficiently harmonious if it be accented on the *first*. That Chaucer did often accent it after the French manner appears from ver. 8778, 9842, 11657, 11945, 12229. In the same manner he accents *Figûre*, ver. 2037, 2045. *Mesûre*, ver. 8132, 8498. *Asûre*, *Statûre*, ver 8130, 3. *Peintûre*, ver. 11967. *Aventûre*, ver. 1188, 1237. *Creatûre*, ver. 2297, 4884, and many other words of the same form, derived from the French language.—3. *Hir;* Their. The Possessive Pronoun of the third Person Plural is variously written, *Hir*, *Hire*, *Her*, and *Here;* not only in different Mss., but even in the same page of good Mss. There seems to be no reason for perpetuating varieties of this kind, which can only have taken their rise from the unsettled state of our Orthography before the invention of Printing, and which now contribute more than any real alteration of the language to obscure the sense of our old Authors. In this edition therefore, *Hir* is constantly put to signify *Their;* and *Hire* to signify *Her*, whether it be the Oblique case of the Personal Pronoun *She*, or the Possessive of the same Pronoun.—4. *Coráges*, Fr. is to be accented on the *Penultima*, as has been already observed. See also ver. 1947, 2215. To the other instances already quoted, add *Avantâge*, ver. 2449, 4566. *Brocâge*, 8375. *Forâge*, ver. 3166. *Linâge*, ver. 4270, 5419. *Servâge*, ver. 1948, 4788. *Costâge*, ver. 5831. *Parâge*, ver. 5822.

XII. 1. *Longen*, as *Maken*. IX. 3.—2. *Gon*, Infinitive Mode of *Go*, terminated in *n* according to the Saxon form.

XIII. 1. *Pálmer'es*, Dis. the *e* of the termination being cut out by Syncope, as it generally is in *Plural Nouns* of *three* Syllables, accented upon the *first*, and in the *Past Tenses* and their *Participles* of *Verbs*, of the same description, ending in *ed*. The reason seems to be, that, where the Accent is placed so early, we cannot pronounce the final syllables fully, without laying more stress upon them, than they can properly bear.—2. *Seken*, as *Gon*. XII. 2.—3. *Strange*, Disyll. Fr.

XIV. 1. *Serve*, Dis. from *Serven*, the *n* being thrown away before *h*.—See above, p. 25 and 59.—2. *Halwes*, Sax. ϸalȝeϱ. The Saxon ȝ is changed into *w*, as in *sorwe*, *morwe*, and some others; though it generally passes into *y*. The derivatives from this same word afford us instances of both forms; *Holyness*, *Holyday*, All-*Hallows*-day.—3. *Couthe*, known. *The Participle of the Past Time* from *Connen*, to know.

xv. And spéciallý from évery [1]*shîres* énde
xvi. Of [1]*Englelónd* to Cánterbúry [2]*they wénde*,
xvii. The hóly blísful mártyr fór to séke,
xviii. That [1]*hém* hath [2]*hólpen*, whán that théy were [3]*séke*.

XV. 1. *Shires*, Dis. *Genitive Case Sing.*

XVI. 1. *Englelond*, Trisyllable, from the Saxon Englalanꝺa.—2. The last foot consists of three syllables.

— to Cán | terbúr | y they wénde.

XVIII. 1. *Hem*; Them. See XI. 1.—2. *Holpen*, the *Participle of the Past Time* from the Irregular Verb *Help*.—3. *Seke*; Sick. As Chaucer usually writes this word *Sike*, we may suppose that in this instance he has altered the Orthography in order to make the Rime more exact; a liberty, with which he sometimes indulges himself, though much more sparingly than his contemporary Poets. The Saxon writers afford authorities to justify either method of spelling, as they use both Seoca and Sioca.

I have hitherto considered these verses as consisting of *ten* syllables only; but it is impossible not to observe, that, according to the rules of pronunciation established above, all of them, except the 3d and 4th, consist really of *eleven* syllables. This is evident at first sight in ver. 11, 12, 13, 14, and might be shown as clearly, by authority or analogy, in the others; but as the *eleventh* syllable, in our versification, being unaccented, may always, I apprehend, be absent or present without prejudice to the metre, there does not seem to be any necessity for pointing it out in every particular instance.

AN

ABSTRACT OF THE HISTORICAL PASSAGES

OF THE

LIFE OF CHAUCER.[1]

BY THOMAS TYRWHITT.

THE Birth of Chaucer in 1328 has been settled, I suppose, from some inscription on his tomb-stone, signifying that he died in 1400. at the age of 72. Of his birth itself we have no memorial, any more than of his parents.[2] He calls himself a *Londenois*, or *Londoner*, in the *Testament of Love;* B. i. fol. 325; and in another passage, fol. 321, speaks of the city of London as the place of his *engendrure*.

We are more in the dark about the place of his education. In his *Court of Love*, ver. 912, he speaks of himself under the name and character of "Philogenet—*of Cambridge*, Clerk." This is by no means a decisive proof that he was really

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[1] It may be observed, that Tyrwhitt, like other biographers of Chaucer, has indulged in a larger amount of scepticism than is perhaps justified. We must refer the reader to the able biography by Sir Harris Nicolas (prefixed to the Aldine edition of Chaucer's works), and to a very pleasing and able sketch in Mr. Charles Knight's "Cabinet Gallery of Portraits."—ED.

[2] Mr. Speght has referred to several Records in which the name of Chaucer occurs. There is mention in the *Monast. Ang.* vol. iii. p. 326, of a *Johannes le Chauser, civis Londoniensis*, an. 1299, who may possibly have been our Poet's grandfather. Though Leland says, that he was *nobili loco natus*, Mr. Speght informs us, that "in the opinion of some heralds—he descended not of any great house, which they gather by his Armes." I am inclined to believe the Heralds, rather than Leland.

The name of *Chaucer* is explained [Life of Ch. Urr.] to signify *a shoemaker;* but it rather means *un faiseur de chausses ou culottiers*. Dict. de Lacombe, v. *Chaucier*. According to what is said to be the old spelling of it, *Chaucesir*, it might be not improbably derived from *Chaufecire*, an office, which still subsists under the title of *Chafewax*.

educated at Cambridge; but it may be admitted, I think, as a strong argument that he was not educated at Oxford; as Leland has supposed, without the shadow of a proof.[1] The Biographers, however, instead of weighing one of these accounts against the other, have adopted both; and tell us very gravely, that he was first at Cambridge, and afterwards removed from thence to complete his studies at Oxford.

It were to be wished that Mr. Speght had given us the date of that Record in the Inner Temple, (which he says a Mr. Buckley had seen,) where "Geffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscane frier in Fleetstreet."[2] Leland has also told us, that our author "*collegia Legu'eiorum frequentavit* after his travels in France, and perhaps before."[3] I must observe that these travels in France rest entirely upon the authority of Leland, whose account is full of inconsistencies.

The first authentic memorial which we have of Chaucer, is the Patent in Rymer, 41 E. III., by which that King grants to him an annuity of 20 marks, by the title of *Valettus noster*.[3] He was then in the 39th year of his age.

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[1] The single circumstance by which Leland has endeavoured to strengthen his supposition that Chaucer was educated at Oxford, is another supposition that he was born in Oxfordshire or Berkshire. The latter has been shown above to be false.

[2] Though this be but a blind story, it rather inclines me to believe that *Chaucer* was of the Inner Temple *in the early part of his life*, before he went into the service of Edward III. The circumstance recorded is plainly a *youthful* sally. On the contrary, Leland supposes his *principal* residence in the Inns of Court to have been *after* he had *flourished* in France, *about the last years* of Richard II., which is totally incredible. Indeed Leland, through his whole account of our author, seems to have considered him as living at least twenty years later than he really did. He takes no notice of the best authenticated circumstances of Chaucer's life in the time of Edward III., and he represents him as highly esteemed by Henry IV. and HIS SON, *qui de Gallis triumphavit*. Henry V. was scarcely twelve years of age when Chaucer died.

[3] *Our Yeoman.* Mr. Speght, who omits this grant, mentions one of the same purport in the 45 E. III., in which Chaucer is styled *Valettus Hospitii*, which he translates—*Grome of the Pallace*. By this he sinks our author as much too low as another writer has raised him too high, by translating the same words—*Gentleman of the King's Priry Chamber* [Life of Ch. Urr.], *Valet*, or *Yeoman*, was the intermediate rank between *Squier* and *Grome*. See the note on ver. 101. See also the Will of Edward Duke of York, *ap. Rymer*, an. 1415, where his legacies *to his*

How long he had served the King in that, or any other, station, and what particular merits were rewarded by this royal bounty,[1] are points equally unknown.

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menial servants are thus arranged—a un Escuier L s. a [un] vadlet XX s. a un garc [on . . .] & a un page VI s. VIII d.

Valettus is probably a corruption of *Vassalettus*, the diminutive of *Vassallus*. Hence this title was also given, not as a name of service, to young men of the highest quality, before they were knighted.

Il ot un fiz de sa mulier,
Ki neit pas uncore chivaler.
Valet esteit et beaus et gent.—*Roman d'Ipomedon.*

So that if Edward III., as Mr. Speght says, "did entitle Laurence Hastings, Lord of Aburganey,—*Valectum nostrum*," I should guess, that the said Lord was *not* "the King's grome, page, or servant," as he supposes, or his yeomen, as Chaucer was, but his *Ward*.

[1] I should have been glad to have met with any ground for supposing, that this mark of Royal favour was a reward of our author's poetical merits. That Chaucer had before this time distinguished himself by his poetical performances, is almost certain. I have mentioned a suspicion [n. on ver. 1920], that the *Assemblee of Foules* alludes to the Courtship of Blanche of Lancaster by John of Gaunt, who married her in 1359, the 33rd year of E. III. And perhaps the *Complaint of the Blacke Knight* might be written for John of Gaunt during the same Courtship. It is still more probable that his Translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and his *Troilus* were both composed before 1367, the æra of which we are speaking. But I think, if the King had really patronised Chaucer as a Poet, we must have found some clear evidence of such a connexion. If the one had been fond of verses, the other would certainly have given him some; especially as he might have exerted his genius in the praise of so illustrious a Patron without any necessity of flattering. If we consider, further, that a few years after the King appointed him to be Comptroller of the Custom of Wool, &c., in the Port of London, with the following injunction in his Patent—"*So that the said Geffrey write with his own hand his rolls touching the said office, and continually reside there, and do and execute all things pertaining to the said office in his own proper person and not by his substitute*,"—we shall probably be of opinion, that His Majesty was either totally insensible of our author's poetical talents, or at least had no mind to encourage him in the cultivation or exercise of them. It should seem that Edward, though adorned with many Royal and Heroic virtues, had not the gift of discerning and patronising a great Poet; a gift, which, like that of genuine Poetry, if we may believe one, who perhaps spoke feelingly upon the subject, is only bestowed on the chosen few by the peculiar favour of heaven:

—neque enim, NISI CARUS AB ORTU
DIIS SUPERIS, poterit MAGNO favisse POETÆ.
Milton's *Mansus.*

I observe, however, that notwithstanding the petrifying quality, with which these Custom-house accounts might be expected to operate upon

From this time we find frequent mention of him in various public instruments.[1] In the 46 E. III. [*ap. Rymer*] the King appoints him Envoy with two others to Genoa, by the title of *Scutifer noster*.[2] In the 48 E. III. he has a grant for life of a pitcher of wine daily [*ap. Rymer*]; and in the same year a grant, during pleasure, of the offices of Comptroller of the custom of wools, and Comptroller of the parva custuma vinorum, &c., in the Port of London. *Ibid.* In the 49 E. III. the King grants to him the Wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's Heir [*MSS. Rymer*, E. III. vol. xi. n. 12], for which he received 10*l.* [Ibid. R. II. vol. i. n. 16]; and in the next year some forfeited wool to the value of 71*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* [Life of Ch. Urr.] In the last year of Ed. III. he was sent to France, with Sir Guichard D'Angle and Richard Stan. or *Sturry*, to treat of a marriage between the Prince of Wales, Richard, and a daughter of the French King. *Froissart*, v. i. ch. 325.

In the next year, 1. R. II., his annuity of 20 marks was confirmed to him, and another annuity of 20 marks was granted to him in lieu of the pitcher of wine daily. See the Licence to surrender these grants in the Life of Ch. Urr. It is probable too that he was confirmed in his Office of Comptroller though the instrument has not been produced.[3] In the 11th of R. II. he had the King's Licence

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Chaucer's genius, he probably wrote his *House of Fame* while he was in that office. I gather this from B. ii. ver. 114, where the Eagle says to him,—

> For when thy labour al done is,
> And hast made all thy *rekenynges*,
> In stede of rest and of newe thynges
> Thou goest home to thyne house anone, &c.

[1] In the 44 E. III. Galf. Ch. in obsequium R. ad partes transmarinas profecturus hab. lit. R. de protectione, 20 Jun. [MS. Harl. 6960, fol. 205.]

[2] *Our Squier*; so that in the course of these five years our author had been promoted from the rank of *Yeoman* to that of *Squier*, attendant upon the King. *Scutifer* and *Armiger*, LAT., are synonymous terms for the French *Escuier*. The biographers, thinking, I suppose, the title of *Squier* too vulgar, have changed it into *Shield-bearer*, as if Chaucer had the special office of carrying the King's shield.

Some observations have been made upon this appointment of Chaucer, as Envoy to Genoa, in the Discourse, &c., n. 20.

[3] This is probable, I think, because Chaucer, in his Testament of Love, frequently alludes to his loss of office as one of the greatest misfortunes brought upon him by his *meddling* in those disturbances, which happened in the city of London in the 7th of R. II. When he fled, to

to surrender his two grants of 20 marks each in favour of John Scalby.[1] In the 13th R. II. he appears to have been Clerk of the works at Westminster, &c., and in the following year at Windsor.[2] In the 17th R. II. the King

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avoid being examined in relation to those disturbances (as he says, Test. of L., fol. 329, b), he was probably superseded in his office.

In the Editor's MS. additions the following grants, and the dates of them, are thus specified:

1. R. II. New grant of Comptroller of Wools, 22 Jan. MS. Harl. 6961, fol. 2.

5 R. II. New grant of Comptroller of parva custuma vinorum, 20 Apr. Ibid. fol. 51.

8 R. II. Grant to execute the office of Comptroller by a deputy, 17 Feb. Ibid. fol. 74.

[1] This Licence, reciting the two grants, is printed in the Life of Ch. Urr. and the author of that life has observed, that this surrender was probably occasioned by our Author's distressed circumstances. Either he despaired of procuring payment of his pensions, or perhaps wanted to raise a sum of ready money. The same writer has extracted from the *Testament of Love* almost all that is now to be known of the history of this distress, which he ascribes very truly to Chaucer's unfortunate engagements with that party in the city of London, of which John of Northampton was at the head. What the real designs of that party were, and how a trifling City-riot, as it seems to have been, came to be treated as a rebellion, are points of great obscurity. There is good ground to believe that Northampton was connected with the Duke of Lancaster. At his trial, in August 1384, he contended, "that he ought not to be tried in the absence of his lord the Duke:" *quo verbo* (says Walsingham, p. 310) *suscitavit suspicionem sinistram tam vulgi quam procerum contra Ducem.* He was condemned however to perpetual imprisonment; in which he remained till July, 1390, when (according to the Monk of Evesham, p. 122) *ad instantiam Ducis Lancastriæ*, Johannes Northampton—*et socii sui nuper de Londoniis banniti, restituti sunt ad pristinas libertates.* The judgement against him was reversed in Parliament the next year, *Rot. Parl.* 14 R. II. n. 36, and he was restored to his lands &c. the year following, *Rot. Parl.* 15 R. II. n. 33. This connexion of Northampton with the Duke of Lancaster will account for the part which Chaucer appears to have taken in this unhappy affair. He was very early attached to that Duke, and was at this time married to a sister of Catherine Swinford, the Duke's mistress; and it is observable, that the first mark of royal favour which he received after his distresses, was bestowed upon him at the same time that Northampton received his pardon, and probably through the same mediation.

[2] See Tanner's Bib. Brit. v. CHAUCER, n. e. It may justly be doubted whether these two offices together indemnified our author for the loss of his former office in the Customs. That was probably a very lucrative one. He complains of "being berafte out of dignitie of office, in which he made a gatheringe of worldly godes;" and in another place he speaks of himself as "once glorious in worldly welefulnesse, and having suche

granted to him a new annuity of twenty pounds [*ap. Rymer*];[1]—in the 21st, his Protection for two years [*Ibid.*]; —and in the 22nd, a pipe of wine annually. *Ibid.* In the next year, the 1st H. IV., his two grants, of the annuity of 20*l.* and of the pipe of wine, were confirmed to him [*MSS. Rymer*, H. IV. vol. i. n. 27], and at the same time he had an additional grant of an annuity of 40 marks. *Ibid.* n. 15. He died, according to the inscription on his tomb-stone, in the beginning of the 2 H. IV. on the 25th of October, 1400.

These, I think, are the principal facts in Chaucer's life, which are attested by authentic evidences.[2] We learn

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godes in welthe as maken men riche." Test. of L. fol. 326, a. b. But that he should ever have been possessed of "lands and revenues to the yearly value almost of a thousand pounds," according to the tradition repeated by Mr. Speght, is quite incredible.

[1] If Chaucer was ever possessed of Dunnington-castle in Berkshire, as his biographers suppose he was, he must have purchased it about this time; for it appears to have been in the possession of Sir Richard Abberbury in the 10th year of R. II. *Monast. Ang.* ii. 474. We have no proof of any such purchase, and the situation of his affairs makes it highly improbable. The tradition, which Mr. Evelyn mentions in his *Sylva*, of an oak in Dunnington-park called *Chaucer's oak*, may be sufficiently accounted for without supposing that it was planted by Chaucer himself, as the Castle was undoubtedly in the hands of Thomas Chaucer for many years.

[2] It appears further from the *Exitus, Pasch* 4 R. II. [MSS. Rymer, R. II. vol. ii. n. 3], that Chaucer, on the 24 May, 1381, received at the Exchequer a half-year's payment of his own two annuities of 20 marks each, and also a half-year's payment of an annuity of 10 marks, granted by E. III. and confirmed by R. II. to his *wife* Philippa, *nuper uni domicellarum Philippæ, nuper Reginæ Angliæ*. The title given to her of *domicella* proves that she was unmarried at the time of her being in the Queen's service. There is a patent in Rymer, 43 E. III., by which the King, about four months after Queen Philippa's death, grants annuities to nine of her *Domicellæ*, viz. to four of them 10 marks, to two 5 pounds, and to three 5 marks. One of them is called *Philippa Pykard*, and might very well be supposed to be the lady whom Chaucer afterwards married, if it were not for two objections, 1. that the annuity granted to her is only 5 pounds, whereas Chaucer's wife appears by this record to have had one of 10 marks; and 2. that the historians, though they own themselves totally ignorant of the Christian name of Chaucer's wife, are all agreed that her surname was *Rouet*, the same with that of her father and eldest sister, Catharine Swynford. The first objection might be got over by supposing that her annuity, though at first only 5 pounds, was encreased, perhaps upon her marriage with Chaucer, to 10 marks. As to the other point, it is not impossible that the father, and the eldest sister, who was his *heiress* [See Pat. 13 H. IV p. 1. m. 35, *ap. Rymer*]

from himself, in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, that he had a son, called *Lowis*, who was ten years of age in 1391.[1] It is the only circumstance, as I recollect, relating to his family, of which he has informed us. A few other historical particulars relating to himself, which may be collected from his writings, have been taken notice of already; and perhaps a more attentive examination of his works might furnish a few more. We must be cautious, however, in such an examination, of supposing allusions which Chaucer never intended, or of arguing from pieces which he never wrote as if they were his. We must not infer from his repeated commendations of the Daysie-flower, that he was specially favoured by Margaret, Countess of Pembroke;[2] and still less should we set him down as a *follower* of Alain Chartier, because his Editors have falsely ascribed to him a translation of one of Alain's poems.

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might bear the name of *de Rouet*, (or *de Roelt*, as it is in the Pat. 13 H. IV. just quoted,) from some estate in their possession, and yet the younger sister might be called by the family-name of *Pykard*.

If the records of payments at the Exchequer for the eleven years preceding 1381 are still in being, they may enable us to clear up these doubts, and also, perhaps, to ascertain very nearly the time of Chaucer's marriage, as they will probably shew when he began to receive his wife's annuity. If this last point were ascertained, we should know better what to think of the relation of Thomas Chaucer to our author. Mr. Speght informs us, "that some held opinion, that Thomas C. was not the sonne of Geffrey," and there are certainly many circumstances which might incline us to that opinion. I was in hopes of meeting with some light upon this subject in a Poem which Lydgate is said to have written, entitled, "A Complaint upon the departure of Thomas Chaucer into France, upon the Kynges Ambassate." A Poem, with this title, is extant in MS. *Harl.* 367. 33. in the hand-writing of J. Stowe; but upon inspection I found it to be a mere love-ballad, without the least imaginable reference to Thomas Chaucer.

[1] See the supplement to this memoir.—Ed.

[2] I can find no other foundation for this notion. Mr Speght, who first started it, says, that "it may appeare in divers treatises by him written: as *in the Prologue of the Legend of good Women* under the name of the Daysie; and likewise *in a Ballad*, beginning, *In the season of Feverier*." The Ballad is among the additions made by John Stowe to Chaucer's works in 1561, and, like the greatest part of those additions, is *of very dubious authority*, to use the gentlest terms. But supposing it genuine, there is nothing in it to make us believe that it had any reference to the Countess of Pembroke. That its commendations of the Daysie ought not to weigh with us is very plain from the other piece cited by Mr. Speght: for the *Legende of good Women*, in which he imagines "the Lady Margaret to be honoured under the name of the

SUPPLEMENT.

The editor makes no apology for introducing the following remarks, illustrating, as they do, one of the most interesting periods in the life of Chaucer.

After speaking of Chaucer's attachment to Philippa Roet, the ingenious author of the *Cabinet Gallery of Portraits* observes: "Suddenly the sound of war rouses the lovers from all such dreamy delights. Edward, like a losing gamester, growing only the more desperate, is fitting out a new army for the conquest of France. The poet must accompany him. It is Chaucer's first military expedition. We must for a while forget the poet in the soldier. Our knowledge of this important incident in the poet's career is derived from the deposition before mentioned, and forms the chief value of that document. Though delivered, therefore, many years subsequent to the period in question, we may here fitly transcribe it. Chaucer, among a host of other witnesses, was called by Richard (Lord) Scrope to bear testimony to his right to certain arms, in opposition to a similar claim on the part of Sir Robert Grosvenor.

"Geoffrey Chaucer, esquire, of the age of forty and upwards, armed for twenty-seven years, produced on behalf of Sir Richard Scrope, sworn and examined, asked whether the arms azure, a bend, ar., belonged, or ought to belong, to the said Sir Richard. Said yes, for he saw him so armed in France, before the town of Ritters (apparently the village of Retiers, near Rennes, in Brittany), and Sir Henry Scrope armed in the same arms, with a white lable and with a banner, and the said Sir Richard armed in the entire arms, azure, with a bend, or. And so he had seen him armed during the whole expedition, until the

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Daysie," was certainly not written till at least twelve years after that Lady's death. See the Discourse, &c., n. 8. for the date of the *Legende*. The Countess *Margaret* must have died not later than 1370, as the Earl's son, by his second wife *Anne*, was about nineteen years of age, when he was killed in a tournament in 1391. Hollinshed, p. 471. It is possible that *le dit de la fleur de lis et de la Marguerite* by *Guillaume de Machaut* [Acad. des Inscr. t. xx. p. 381] and the *Dittié de la flour de la Margherite* by *Froissart* [Ibid. t. x. p. 669, t. xiv. hist. p. 228], (neither of which had the least relation to the Countess of Pembroke,) might furnish us with the true key to those mystical compliments which our poet has paid to the Daysie-flower

said Geoffrey was taken. Asked how he knew that the said arms appertained to the said Sir Richard. Said that he heard say, from old knights and esquires, that they had been reputed to be their arms, as common fame and the public voice proved; and he also said that they had continued their possession of the said arms in banners, glass paintings, and vestments, and commonly called the arms of Scrope. Asked if he had heard any one say who was the first ancestor of the said Sir Richard who first bore the said arms. Said no; nor had he ever heard otherwise than that they were come of ancient ancestry and of old gentry, and used the same arms. Asked if he had heard say that it passed the memory of man. Asked whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge made by Sir Robert Grosvenor, or by his ancestors, or by any one in his name, to the said Sir Richard, or to any of his ancestors. Said no; but he said that he was once in Friday Street, in London, and as he was walking in the street, he saw hanging a new sign made of the said arms, and he asked what inn that was that had hung out these Arms of Scrope. And one answered him, and said, 'No, sir, they are not hung out for the Arms of Scrope, nor painted there for those arms; but they are painted and put there by a Knight of the County of Chester, whom men call Sir Robert Grosvenor, and that was the first time he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or of his ancestors, or of any other bearing the name of Grosvenor.' Chaucer says he had been armed twenty-seven years. This means, according to the then prevalent mode of speaking of such matters, that in 1359, twenty-seven years before the date of the deposition, 1386, Chaucer had first borne Arms. He says, also, he was in France in one of the Military Expeditions of the time. Now, as 1359 is the very year in which Edward took a great army into that country; and as for three years before and for ten years after, there was no other such Expedition set on foot; and as, when fresh ones were dispatched, we know the Poet was not concerned in them, but was differently engaged, why, on the whole, the inference is irresistible that it was in Edward's Expedition of 1359 that Chaucer first became a soldier.

"And that expedition was one calculated to test most searchingly his possession of the soldier's best quality, fortitude, though not at all calculated to make him enamoured of the vocation. The expedition throughout exhibited to him only the shades of military life, without a glimpse of its

sunshine. A more formidable army had never perhaps left the English shores—certainly had never left it to meet so melancholy a fate; it comprised a hundred thousand men, and filled a thousand ships, during the passage from coast to coast. And if for a time it seemed as irresistible as it had promised to be, that was because so many came forth to meet it. From Calais Edward moved on through Artois to Picardy; and thence to Rheims, which he besieged with the intention, it is said, of having himself crowned King of France, in the cathedral, the usual place of coronation for the sovereign of the country. But the garrison was brave, the place strong, and the season winter. In the end he raised the siege, and marched into Burgundy, and then, turning towards Paris, he moved forwards till the dismayed Parisians beheld an English army encamped without their walls. The French, however, had learned wisdom from the success with which they had often defended their fortified places, and from the failure that attended their efforts in the open field. So they were not to be drawn outside the walls of the capital, not even by a challenge; and at the same time Edward was quite unable to force his way in; so, harassed by insufficient supplies of provisions, he presently retreated towards Brittany. Every step of his way was marked by falling horses and men, who died from hunger, or the intolerable fatigue to which they were subjected. No wonder that the spirits of the troops sank, and that Edward's own mind was so affected, that he became superstitious, and yielded, beneath the terror of a great storm, the peace that not all the miseries of his own subjects, and the infinitely greater miseries they had inflicted on the French people, could wring from him. On the 8th of May, 1360, the treaty of Bretigny was concluded; Bretigny being a village near to Chartres. Of the greater part of the horrors of the expedition Chaucer was an eye-witness and participator, with the additional pang added, that, as he himself tells, he was 'taken' prisoner. How long he remained in captivity it is impossible to say; but there is reason to fear that the period may have even extended to five or six years. From 1359-60 to a little before 1366, his history is a blank to us; and the next circumstance we find related of him looks very like the greetings of his friends and of his sovereign after a prolonged and painful absence."

THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

1—8.

WHANNE that April with his shoures sote[1]
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in swiche[2] licour,
Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eke with his sote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt[3] and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram[4] his halfe cours yronne,

[1] Sweet. [2] Such. [3] Grove.

[4] It seems to have been the intention of Chaucer, in the first lines of the Prologue, to mark with some exactness the *time* of his supposed pilgrimage; but unluckily the two circumstances of his description, which were most likely to answer that purpose, are each of them irreconcilable to the other. When he tells us that "the shoures of April had *perced to the rote* the drought of March," we must suppose, in order to allow due time for such an operation, that April was far advanced; while, on the other hand, the place of the sun, "having just run half his course in the Ram," restrains us to some day in the very latter end of March; as the vernal equinox, in the age of Chaucer, according to his own treatise on the Astrolabe, was computed to happen on the 12th of March. This difficulty may, and I think should, be removed by reading in ver. 8, *the Bull*, instead of *the Ram*. All the parts of the description will then be consistent."—*Tyrwhitt.*

An ingenious writer (to whom we shall hereafter be frequently indebted), in *Notes and Queries*, v. iii. p. 316, has opposed this conjecture, remarking, that "there are no less than two ways of understanding the seventh and eighth lines of the Prologue so as to be perfectly in accordance with the rest of the description. One of these would be to suppose the sign Aries divided into two portions (not necessarily equal in the phraseology of the time), one of which would appertain to March and the other to April; and that Chaucer, by the 'halfe cours yronne,' meant the *last*, or *the April*, half of the sign Aries. But I think a more probable sup-

And smale foules[1] maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes,
To serve halwes couthe[2] in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Englelond, to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.
Befelle, that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard[3] as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with devoute corage,
At night was come into that hostelrie
Wel nine and twenty in a compagnie

position still would be to imagine the month of April, of which Chaucer was speaking, to be divided into two 'halfe cours,' in one of which the sun would be in Aries, and in the other in Taurus; and that when Chaucer says that 'the yonge sonne had in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,' he meant that the *Aries half of the month of April* had been ran through, thereby indicating, in *general terms*, some time approaching to the middle of April." The same writer observes, that "the whole of the opening of the Prologue, down to verse 19, is descriptive, not of any particular days, but of the usual season of pilgrimages; and Chaucer himself plainly declares, by the words 'in *that* season, on *a* day,' that the day is *as yet* indefinite." See also, *ibid.*, p. 515, and the note on v. 17,322.

[1] Birds. [2] Known.

[3] They who are disposed to believe the pilgrimage to have been real, and to have happened in 1383, may support their opinion by the following inscription, which is still to be read upon the inn, now called the Talbot, in Southwark: "This is the Inn where Sir Jeffrey Chaucer and the twenty-nine Pilgrims lodged in their journey to Canterbury. Anno 1383." Though the present inscription is evidently of a very recent date, we might suppose it to have been propagated to us by a succession of faithful transcripts from the very time; but unluckily there is too good reason to be assured that the first inscription of this sort was not earlier than the last century. Mr. Speght, who appears to have been inquisitive concerning this inn in 1597, has left us this account of it in his Glossary, v. Tabard: "A jaquet, or slevelesse coate, worne in times past by noblemen in the warres, but now onely by heraults, and is called theyre coate of armes in servise. It is the signe of an inne in Southwarke by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester. This is the hostelry where Chaucer and the other pilgrims mett together, and, with Henry Baily their hoste, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury. And whereas through time it hath bin much decaied, it is now by Master J. Preston, with the abbot's house thereto

Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle[1]
In felawship, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Canterbury wolden ride.
The chambres and the stables weren wide,
And wel we weren esed[2] atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was gon to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everich on,[3]
That I was of hir[4] felawship anon,
And made forword erly for to rise,
To take oure way ther as I you devise.
But natheles, while I have time and space,
Or that I forther in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it accordant to reson,
To tellen you alle the condition
Of eche of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degre;
And eke in what araie that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I firste beginne.

A knight[5] ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time that he firste began

adjoyned, newly repaired, and with convenient roomes much increased, for the receipt of many guests."

If any inscription of this kind had then been there, he would hardly have omitted to mention it; and therefore I am persuaded it has been put up since his time, and most probably when the sign was changed from the Tabard to the Talbot, in order to preserve the ancient glory of the house, notwithstanding its new title. Whoever furnished the date, must be allowed to have at least invented plausibly.

While I am upon the subject of this famous hostelry, I will just add, that it was probably parcel of two tenements which appear to have been conveyed by William de Ludegarsale to the abbot. &c. *de Hydâ juxta Winton*, in 1306, and which are described, in a former conveyance there recited, to extend in length, "a communi fossato de Suthwerke versus Orientem, usque Regiam viam de Suthwerke versus Occidentem."—Registrum de Hyde, MS. Harl. 1761. fol. 166—173. If we should ever be so happy as to recover the account-books of the Abbey of Hyde, we may possibly learn what rent Harry Bailly paid for his inn, and many other important particulars.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Fallen. [2] Accommodated. [3] Every one of them. [4] Their.

[5] Why Chaucer should have chosen to bring his knight from *Alexandria* and *Lettowe* rather than from *Cressy* and *Poitiers*, is a problem difficult to resolve, except by supposing that the slightest services against infidels were in those days more honourable than the most splendid victories over Christians.—*Tyrwhitt.*

To riden out, he loved chevalrie,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he ridden, no man ferre,[1]
As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisandre he was whan it was wonne.[2]
Ful often time he hadde the bord begonne[3]
Aboven alle nations in Pruce.
In Lettowe hadde he reysed[4] and in Ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degre.
In Gernade[5] at the siege eke hadde he be
Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie.[6]
At Leyes[7] was he, and at Satalie[8],
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete see[9]
At many a noble armee hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for our faith at Tramissene
In listes thries, and ay slain his fo.
This ilke worthy knight hadde ben also
Somtime with the lord of Palatie,[10]
Agen another hethen in Turkie:
And evermore he hadde a sovereine pris.
And though that he was worthy he was wise,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
In alle his lif, unto no manere[11] wight.
He was a veray parfit gentil knight.

Farther. So *derre* for dearer, v. 1450.

[2] *I. e.*, in A.D. 1365, by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, who, however, immediately abandoned it.

[3] *I. e., he had been placed at the head of the table;* the usual compliment to extraordinary merit. When our military men wanted employment, it was usual for them to go and serve in *Prusse*, or Prussia, with the knights of the Teutonic order, who were in a state of constant warfare with their heathen neighbours in *Lettow* (Lithuania), *Ruse* (Russia), and elsewhere. A pagan *King of Lettow* is mentioned by Walsingham, pp. 180, 342.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[4] Journeyed.

[5] The city of Algezir was taken from the Moorish King of Granada in 1344.

[6] Probably in Africa.

[7] Layas, in Armenia.

[8] Attalia

[9] Better, the "Grekish sea," *i. e.*, the part of the Mediterranean, from Sicily to Cyprus. See Tyrwhitt's notes.

[10] Palathia, in Anatolia.

[11] Meaner, inferior.

But for to tellen you of his araie,
His hors was good, but he ne was not gaie.
Of fustian he wered a gipon,[1]
Alle besmotred[2] with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome fro his viage,[3]
And wente for to don his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone a yonge squier,
A lover, and a lusty bacheler,
With lockes crull[4] as they were laide in presse.
Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver,[5] and grete of strengthe.
And he hadde be somtime in chevachie, --
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
Alle ful of freshe floures, white and rede.
Singing he was, or floyting[6] alle the day,
He was as freshe, as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with sleves long and wide.
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.
He coude songes make, and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
So hote he loved, that by nightertale[7]
He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,
And carf before his fader at the table.[8]

A yeman[9] hadde he, and servantes no mo
At that time, for him luste to ride so;

[1] A short cassock. [2] Smutted. [3] Journey. [4] Curled.
[5] Agile, nimble. [6] Playing on the flute. [7] Night time.
[8] It was anciently the custom for squires, of the highest quality, to carve at the sires' tables.
[9] *Yeman*, or *yeoman*, is an abbreviation of *yeongeman*, as *youthe* is of *yeongthe*. Young men being most usually employed in service, servants have, in many languages, been denominated from the single circumstance of age; as *puer*, *garçon*, boy, groom. As a title of service or office, *yoman* is used in the Stat. 37 E. III. c. 9 and 11, to denote a servant of the next degree above a *garson*, or groom; and at this day, in several departments of the royal household, the attendants are distributed into three classes of *serjeants* or *squiers*, *yeomen*, and *grooms*.—*Tyrwhitt*.

And he was cladde in cote and hode of grene.
A shefe of peacock arwes[1] bright and kene
Under his belt he bare ful thriftily.
Wel coude he dresse his takel[2] yemanly:
His arwes drouped not with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bare a mighty bowe.
A not-hed[3] hadde he, with a broune visage.
Of wood-craft coude he wel alle the usage.
Upon his arme he bare a gaie bracer,
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gaie daggere,
Harneised wel, and sharpe as point of spere:
A Cristofre[4] on his brest of silver shene.
An horne he bare, the baudrik was of grene.
A forster was he sothely as I gesse.

There was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;
Hire gretest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy;
And she was cleped madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the service devine,
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,[5]
After the scole of Stratford atte bowe,
For Frenche of Paris[6] was to hire unknowe.
At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.
In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.[7]
Hire over lippe wiped she so clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught.
Ful semely after hire mete she raught.

[1] Arrows with peacock feathers. [2] Arrow.
[3] *I. e.* round, like a nut, probably from being cropped.
[4] I do not see the meaning of this ornament. By the stat. 37 E. III. *yomen* are forbidden to wear any ornaments of gold or silver.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[5] Neatly, cleverly.
[6] It has been mentioned before, that Chaucer thought but meanly of the English-French spoken in his time. It was proper, however, that the prioresse should speak some sort of French; not only as a woman of fashion, a character which she is represented to affect, ver. 139, 140, but as a religious person.—*Tyrwhitt.* [7] Delight, pleasure.

And sikerly she was of grete disport,
And ful plesant, and amiable of port,
And peined hire to contrefeten[1] chere
Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel bredo.
But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde[2] smert:[3]
And all was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hire wimple[4] ypinched was;
Hire nose tretis;[5] hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red;
But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe;
For hardily she was not undergrowe.
Full fetise[6] was hire cloke, as I was ware.
Of smale corall aboute hire arm she bare
A pair of bedes, gauded[7] all with grene;
And theron heng a broche of gold ful shene,
On whiche was first ywriten a crouned A,
And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Another Nonne also with hire hadde she,[8]
That was hire chapelleine, and Preestes thre.

A Monk ther was, a fayre[9] for the maistrie,
An out-rider, that loved venerie;[10]
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deinte hors hadde he in stable:

[1] She took great pains to assume. [2] A stick. [3] Hardly
[4] A covering for the neck. [5] Long and well proportioned.
[6] Neat, tasteful. [7] Decked.
[8] This and the following line have been condemned by Tyrwhitt as spurious. See his Discourse, p. 78.
[9] We should say, *a fair one;* but in Chaucer's time such tautology was not, I suppose, elegant. So below, ver. 189:

Therfore he was a prikasoure *a right.*

As to the phrase *for the maistrie*, I take it to be derived from the French *pour la maistrie*, which I find, in an old book of Physick, applied to such medicines as we usually call *Sorereign*, excellent above all others. MS. *Bod.* 761. *Secreta h. Sump de Clowburnel*, fol. 17 b. Ciroigne bone *pur la maistrie* a briser et a meurer apostemes, &c.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[10] Hunting.

And whan he rode, men mighte his bridel here
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clere,
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.
The reule of seint Maure and of seint Beneit,
Because that it was olde and somdele streit,
This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the trace.
He yave not of the text a pulled hen,[1]
That saith, that hunters ben not holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is rekkeles,[2]
Is like to a fish that is waterles;
This is to say, a monk out of his cloistre.
This ilke text held he not worth an oistre.
And I say his opinion was good.
What shulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Upon a book in cloistre alway to pore,
Or swinken with his hondes, and laboure,
As Austin bit?[3] how shal the world be served?
Let Austin have his swink[4] to him reserved.
Therfore he was a prickasoure[5] a right:
Grehoundes he hadde as swift as foul of flight:
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.

[1] *I. e.*, he cared not a straw. One MS. reads a *pullet* hen, which seems more intelligible, unless it refer to the supposition that a plucked hen cannot lay eggs.—*Tyrwhitt, gl.*

[2] Rekkeles MS. C. reads *Cloisterles;* to which the only objection is, that if it had been the true reading there would have been no occasion to explain or paraphrase it in ver. 181. The text alluded to is attributed by Gratian, *Decret.* P. ii. Cau. xvi. Q. i. c. viii. to a Pope Eugenius.—*Sicut piscis sine aquâ caret vitâ, ita sine monasterio monachus.* In P. P. according to MS. *Cotton.* Vesp. B. xvi. (for the passage is omitted in the printed editions), a similar saying is quoted from Gregory.

Gregori the grete clerk garte write in bokes
The rewle of alle religioun riytful and obedient
Riyt as fishes in a flod whan hem faileth water
Deien for drowthe whan thei drie liggen
Riyt so religious roten and sterven
That out of covent or cloistre coveiten to dwelle.

As the known senses of *rekkeles*, viz., *careless, negligent*, by no means suit with this passage, I am inclined to suspect that Chaucer possibly wrote *reghelles*, *i. e.*, without rule. *Regol*, from *Regula*, was the Saxon word for a *rule*, and particularly for a *monastic rule*.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Biddeth. [4] Labour.

[5] A hard rider, from *prick*, to spur on a horse.

I saw his sleves purfiled at the hond
With gris,[1] and that the finest of the lond.
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne:
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.
His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,
And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.
His eyen stepe,[2] and rolling in his hed,
That stemed as a forneis of a led.
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined[3] gost.
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.

A Frere ther was, a wanton and a mery,
A Limitour,[4] a ful solempne man.
In all the ordres foure is non that can
So moche of daliance and fayre langage.
He hadde ymade ful many a mariage
Of yonge wimmen, at his owen cost.
Until his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel beloved, and familier was he
With frankeleins[5] over all in his contree.
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun:
For he had power of confession,
As saide himselfe, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confession,
And plesant was his absolution.
He was an esy man to give penance,
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance:
For unto a poure ordre for to give
Is signe that a man is wel yshrive.
For if he gave, he dorste make avant,[6]
He wiste that a man was repentant.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe although him sore smerte.

[1] The habit of wearing fur trimmings was forbidden the monks by Cardinal Wolsey, in 1519.
[2] Sunk deep in his head. [3] Wasted, tormented.
[4] *I. e.*, one licensed to beg within a certain district.
[5] Wealthy landholders; country gentlemen of good estate. [6] Boast.

Therfore in stede of weping and praieres,
Men mote give silver to the poure freres.
His tippet was ay farsed[1] ful of knives,
And pinnes, for to given fayre wives.
And certainly he hadde a mery note.
Wel coude he singe and plaien on a rote.[2]
Of yeddinges[3] he bare utterly the pris.
His nekke was white as the flour de lis.
Therto he strong was as a champioun,
And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
Better than a lazar or a beggere,
For unto swiche a worthy man as he
Accordeth nought, as by his faculte,
To haven with sike lazars acquaintance.
It is not honest, it may not avance,
As for to delen with no swiche pouraille,[4]
But all with riche, and sellers of vitaille.
And over all, ther as profit shuld arise,
Curteis he was, and lowly of servise.
Ther n'as no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste begger in all his hous:
And gave a certaine ferme for the grant,
Non of his bretheren came in his haunt.
For though a widewe hadde but a shoo,
(So plesant was his *In principio*)[5]
Yet wold he have a ferthing or he went.
His pourchas was wel better than his rent.
And rage he coude as it hadde ben a whelp,
In lovedayes,[6] ther coude he mochel help.
For ther was he nat like a cloisterere,
With thredbare cope, as is a poure scolere,
But he was like a maister or a pope.
Of double worsted was his semicope,
That round was as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lisped for his wantonnesse,
To make his English swete upon his tonge;
And in his harping, whan that he hadde songe,

[1] Stuffed. [2] By rote, by heart. [3] A kind of song.
[4] *I. e.*, commonalty, poor people.
[5] The beginning of the Latin text either of Genesis or of St. John's Gospel.
[6] Days appointed for the amicable settlement or arbitration of differences.

His eyen twinkeled in his hed aright,
As don the sterres in a frosty night.
This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee,[1] and highe on hors he sat,
And on his hed a Flaundrish bever hat.
His botes clapsed fayre and fetisly.
His resons spake he ful solempnely,
Souning[2] alway the encrese of his winning.
He wold the see were kept[3] for anything
Betwixen Middelburgh and Orewell.[4]
Wel coud he in eschanges sheldes[5] selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit besette;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So stedefastly didde he his governance,
With his bargeines, and with his chevisance.[6]
Forsothe he was a worthy man withalle,
But soth to sayn, I n'ot how men him calle.

A Clerk ther was of Oxenforde also,
That unto logike hadde long ygo.
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and therto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,[7]
For he hadde geten him yet no benefice,
Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was lever han[8] at his beedes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.[9]

[1] Mixed, various colours, motley. [2] Sounding.
[3] Guarded. The old subsidy of tonnage and poundage was given to the king *pur la sauf garde et custodie del mer*, 12 E. IV. c. 3.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[4] A seaport in Essex.
[5] French crowns, so called from their having a shield stamped on one side. [6] An arrangement for borrowing money.
[7] A sort of short upper cloak. [8] *I. e.*, he had rather, he preferred.
[9] Psaltery. It may be observed, that although organ-builders have introduced reed stops, purporting to represent the sacbut, clarion, psaltery, shalm, and other instruments mentioned in Scripture, we are totally ignorant what they were. The psaltery was probably a stringed instrument, and perhaps the same as the "rote" spoken of elsewhere.

But all be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
But all that he might of his frendes hente,[1]
On bokes and on lerning he it spente,
And besily gan for the soules praie
Of hem, that yave him wherwith to scolaie.[2]
Of studie toke he moste cure and hede.
Not a word spake he more than was nede;
And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short and quike, and ful of high sentence.
Souning in moral vertue was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A sergeant of the lawe ware and wise,
That often hadde yben at the paruis,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discrete he was, and of gret reverence:
He semed swiche,[3] his wordes were so wise,
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleine commissioun;
For his science, and for his high renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many on.
So grete a pourchasour was nowher non.
All was fee simple to him in effect,
His pourchasing might not ben in suspect.
Nowher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.
In termes hadde he cas and domes[4] alle,
That fro the time of king Will. weren falle.
Therto he coude endite, and make a thing,
Ther coude no wight pinche at his writing.
And every statute coude he plaine by rote.
He rode but homely in a medlee cote,
Girt with a seint of silk, with barres[5] smale;
Of his array tell I no lenger tale.

A frankelein was in this compagnie;
White was his berd, as is the dayesie.
Of his complexion he was sanguin.
Wel loved he by the morwe[6] a sop in win.
To liven in delit was ever his wone,
For he was Epicures owen sone,

[1] Get. [2] To attend school. [3] Such.
[4] Opinions. [5] Stripes. [6] Morning.

That held opinion, that plein delit
Was verraily felicite parfite.
An housholder, and that a grete[1] was he;
Seint Julian[2] he was in his contree,
His brede, his ale, was alway after on;[3]
A better envyned[4] man was no wher non.
Withouten bake mete never was his hous,
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of alle deintees that men coud of thinke,
After the sondry sesons of the yere,
So changed he his mete and his soupere.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,
And many a breme, and many a luce[5] in stewe.
Wo was his coke, but if[6] his sauce were
Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stode redy covered alle the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful often time he was knight of the shire.
An anelace[7] and a gipciere[8] all of silk,
Heng at his girdel, white as morwe[9] milk.
A shereve hadde he ben, and a countour.[10]
Was no wher swiche a worthy vavasour.[11]

[1] *I.e.*, a great one.

[2] St. Julian was eminent for providing his votaries with good lodgings and accommodation of all sorts. In the title of his Legende, MS. *Bod.* 1596, fol. 4, he is called "St. Julian, the gode herberjour." It ends thus:

Therfore yet to this day thei that over lond wende,
Thei biddeth Seint Julian anon that gode herborw he hem sende,
And Seint Julianes Pater noster ofte seggeth also,
For his fader soule and his moderes, that he hem bring therto.
Tyrwhitt.

St. Julian was a patron of pilgrims, and also of *lenones*. See Brand's Antiquities, v. i. p. 359, of Sir Henry Ellis's edition.

[3] One o'clock. [4] Better stocked with wine. [5] Pike.

[6] *I. e.* if it were not.

[7] A kind of knife or dagger, usually worn at the waist.

[8] A purse. [9] Morning.

[10] This word has been changed in Ed. Urr., upon what authority I know not, to *Coroner*. The MSS. all read *Countour*, or *comptour*. At the same time it is not easy to say what office is meant. I have a notion, that the foreman of the inquest in the Hundred-court was called a *Countour*; but the law glossaries do not take notice of any such sense of the word.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[11] A kind of middle-class landholder. See *Tyrwhitt.*

An haberdasher, and a carpenter,
A webbe,[1] a deyer, and a tapiser,[2]
Were alle yclothed in o livere,
Of a solempne and grete fraternite.[3]
Ful freshe and newe hir gere ypiked was.
Hir knives were ychaped not with bras,
But all with silver wrought ful clene and wel,
Hir girdeles and hir pouches every del[4].
Wel semed eche of hem a fayre burgeis,
To sitten in a gild halle, on the deis.[5]
Everich,[6] for the wisdom that he can,
Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.
For catel hadden they ynough and rent,
And eke hir wives wolde it wel assent:
And elles[7] certainly they were to blame.
It is ful fayre to ben ycleped madame,
And for to gon to vigiles all before,
And have a mantel reallich[8] ybore.

A coke they hadden with hem for the nones,[9]
To boile the chikenes and the marie bones,
And poudre marchant, tart and galingale,[10]
Wel coude he knowe a draught of London ale.
He coude roste, and sethe, and broile, and frie,
Maken mortrewes,[11] and wel bake a pie.

[1] A weaver. [2] A tapestry-worker.

[3] An evident reference to the guilds of the middle ages. The epithet "solempne" probably refers to the initiation into a species of free-masonry, which was bestowed upon the licensed workers in a particular department. Compare Palgrave's "Merchant and Fryar," ch. iii.

[4] Every bit. [5] Dais.

[6] Each one of them. [7] Otherwise.

[8] Royally. [9] The nonce, the occasion.

[10] What kind of ingredient this was I cannot tell. Cotgrave mentions a *Poudre blanche* and a *Poudre de duc*, which seem both to have been used in cookery. I must take notice, that the epithet *tart*, in most of the MS., is annexed to *poudre marchant*, and I rather wish I had left it there, as, for anything that I know, it may suit that as well as Galingale. *Tyrwhitt.*

[11] Lord Bacon, in his Nat. Hist. i. 48, speaks of "a *mortrese* made with the brawn of capons *stamped* and strained." He joins it with the cullice (*coulis*) of cocks. It seems to have been a rich broth, or soupe, in the preparation of which the flesh was stamped, or beat, in a mortar; from whence it probably derived its name, *une mortreuse*; though I cannot say that I have ever met with the French word.—*Tyrwhitt.*

But gret harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shinne a mormal[1] hadde he.
For blanc manger[2] that made he with the best.

A shipman was ther, woned fer by West:
For ought I wote, he was of Dertemouth.
He rode upon a rouncie,[3] as he couthe,
All in a goune of falding to the knee.
A dagger hanging by a las hadde hee
About his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hote sommer hadde made his hewe al broun.
And certainly he was a good felaw.
Ful many a draught of win he hadde draw
From Burdeux ward, while that the chapman slepe.
Of nice conscience toke he no kepe.
If that he faught, and hadde the higher hand,
By water he sent hem home to every land.
But of his craft to reken wel his tides,
His stremes and his strandes him besides,
His herberwe,[4] his mone, and his lodemanage,[5]
Ther was non swiche, from Hull unto Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake:
With many a tempest hadde his berd be shake.
He knew wel alle the havens, as they were,
Fro Gotland, to the Cape de finistere,
And every creke in Bretagne and in Spaine.
His barge ycleped was the Magdelaine.

With us ther was a doctour of phisike.
In all this world ne was ther non him like
To speke of phisike, and of surgerie:
For he was grounded in astronomie.
He kept his patient a ful gret del
In houres by his magike naturel.
Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his images for his patient.
He knew the cause of every maladie,
Were it of cold, or hote, or moist, or drie,
And wher engendred, and of what humour,
He was a veray parfite practisour.

[1] A gangrene.
[2] Different from our evening party composition. One of the ingredients is described as "the brawne of a capon, tesed small."—*Turwhitt. gl.*
[3] A common hack. [4] The place of the sun. [5] Pilotship.

The cause yknowe, and of his harm the rote,
Anon he gave to the sike man his bote.[1]
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To send him dragges, and his lettuaries,[2]
For eche of hem made other for to winne:
Hir friendship n'as not newe to beginne.
Wel knew he the old Esculapius,
And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus;
Old Hippocras, Hali,[3] and Gallien;
Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen;
Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of gret nourishing, and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sanguin and in perse[4] he clad was alle
Lined with taffata, and with sendalle.[5]
And yet he was but esy of dispence:
He kepte that he wan in the pestilence.
For gold in phisike is a cordial;
Therfore he loved gold in special.

A good wif was ther of beside Bathe,
But she was som del[6] defe, and that was scat'.e.
Of cloth making she hadde swiche an haunt,[7]
She passed hem of Ipres, and of Gaunt.
In all the parish wif ne was ther non,
That to the offring[8] before hire shulde gon,
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground;
I dorste swere, they weyeden a pound;
That on the Sonday were upon hire hede.
Hire hosen weren of fine scarlet rede,
Ful streite yteyed, and shoon ful moist[9] and newe.
Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew.
She was a worthy woman all hire live,
Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five,

[1] Remedy.
[2] Electuaries.
[3] An Arabian physician.
[4] Sky-coloured, blue.
[5] A kind of thin silk.
[6] A little.
[7] Practice, custom.
[8] The offertory at mass.
[9] Fresh.—See *Tyrwhitt.*

Withouten other compagnie in youthe.
But therof nedeth not to speke as nouthe.[1]
And thries hadde she ben at Jerusaleme.
She hadde passed many a strange streme.
At Rome she hadde ben, and at Boloine,
In Galice at Seint James, and at Coloine.
She coude moche of wandring by the way.
Gat-tothed[2] was she, sothly for to say.
Upon an ambler esily she sat,
Ywimpled wel, and on hire hede an hat.
As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe.
A fote-mantel about hire hippes large,
And on hire fete a pair of sporres sharpe.
In felawship wel coude she laughe and carpe
Of remedies of love she knew parchance,
For of that arte she coude[3] the olde dance.

A good man ther was of religioun,
That was a poure persone[4] of a toun:
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche.
His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversite ful patient:
And swiche he was ypreved often sithes.
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven out of doute,
Unto his poure parishens aboute,
Of his offring, and eke of his substance.
He coude in litel thing have suffisance.
Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,
In sikenesse and in mischief to visite
The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,[5]
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.
Out of the gospel he the wordes caught,
And this figure he added yet therto,
That if gold ruste, what shuld iren do?

[1] Now.
[2] Tyrwhitt confesses himself unable to explain this strange expression.
[3] Knew. [4] Parson, rector. [5] High and low.

For if a preest be foule, on whom we trust,
No wonder is a lewed man to rust:
And shame it is, if that a preest take kepe,
To see a shitten shepherd, and clene shepe:
Wel ought a preest ensample for to yeve,
By his clenenesse, how his shepe shulde live.
He sette not his benefice to hire,
And lette his shepe acombred in the mire,
And ran unto London, unto Seint Poules,
To seken him a chanterie[1] for soules,
Or with a brotherhede to be withold:
But dwelt at home, and kepte wel his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarie.
He was a shepherd, and no mercenarie.[2]
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to sinful men not dispitous,
Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,[3]
But in his teching discrete and benigne.
To drawen folk to heven, with fairenesse,
By good ensample, was his besinesse:
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were of highe, or low estat,
Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.[4]
A better preest I trowe that nowher non is.
He waited after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him no spiced conscience,[5]
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

With him ther was a plowman, was his brother,
That hadde ylaid of dong ful many a fother.
A trewe swinker,[6] and a good was he,
Living in pees, and parfite charitee.
God loved he beste with alle his herte
At alle times, were it gain or smerte,
And than his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde thresh, and therto dike, and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every poure wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.

[1] Thirty-five of these chantries were established at St. Paul's, being served by fifty-four priests.—Dugdale, *Hist. pref.* p. 41.—*Tyrwhitt, gl.*
[2] An obvious allusion to John, x. 12. 13.
[3] Proud. [4] Occasion.
[5] Probably meaning, that he did not care to flavour his lectures with obliging phrases, to make them palatable. In verse 6017 it appears to be used in a different sense. [6] Labourer.

His tithes paied he ful fayre and wel
Both of his propre swinke, and his catel.
In a tabard[1] he rode upon a mere.
Ther was also a reve,[2] and a millere,
A sompnour,[3] and a pardoner also,
A manciple,[4] and myself, ther n'ere no mo.

The miller was a stout carle for the nones,
Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones;
That proved wel, for over all ther he came,
At wrastling he wold bere away the ram.
He was short shuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,[5]
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.
His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,
And therto brode, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop[6] right of his nose he hade
A wert, and theron stode a tufte of heres,
Rede as the bristles of a sowes eres.
His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.
A swerd and bokeler bare he by his side.
His mouth as wide was as a forneis.
He was a jangler,[7] and a goliardeis,[8]
And that was most of sinne, and harlotries.
Wel coude he stelen corne, and tollen thries.
And yet he had a thomb[9] of gold parde..
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soune,
And therwithall he brought us out of toune.

[1] See above, on verse 20. [2] Steward.

[3] An officer appointed to *summon* delinquents to appear in ecclesiastical courts, now called an apparitor.

[4] One who has the office of purchasing provisions for a college, or inn of court

[5] A hard knot in a tree. [6] Top. [7] A prater, babbler.

[8] *Un goliardois*, Fr.; *Goliardus*, or *Golindensis*, Lat. This jovial sect seems to have been so called from Golias, the real or assumed name of a man of wit, towards the end of the xiith century, who wrote the *Apocalypsis Golie*, and other pieces in burlesque Latin rimes, some of which have been falsely attributed to Walter Map. See Tanner's Bibl. Brit. in v. Golias, and Du Cange in v. Goliardus.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[9] If the allusion be, as is most probable, to the old proverb, *Every honest Miller has a thumb of gold*, this passage may mean that our miller, notwithstanding his thefts, was *an honest miller*, *i. e.* as honest as his brethren.—*Tyrwhitt.*

A gentil manciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours[1] mighten take ensemple
For to ben wise in bying of vitaille.
For whether that he paide, or toke by taille,
Algate he waited so in his achate,
That he was ay before in good estate.
Now is not that of God a ful fayre grace,
That swiche a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an hepe of lered men?
Of maisters had he mo than thries ten.
That were of lawe expert and curious:
Of which ther was a dosein in that hous,
Worthy to ben stewardes of rent and lond
Of any lord that is in Englelond,
To maken him live by his propre good,
In honour detteles,[2] but if he were wood,
Or live as scarsly, as him list desire;
And able for to helpen all a shire
In any cas that mighte fallen or happe;
And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe.[3]

The reve was a slendre colerike man,
His berd was shave as neighe as ever he can.
His here was by his eres round yshorne.
His top was docked like a preest beforne.
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Ylike a staff, ther was no calf ysene.
Wel coude he kepe a garner and a binne:
Ther was non auditour coude on him winne.
Wel wiste he by the drought, and by the rain,
The yelding of his seed, and of his grain.
His lordes shepe, his nete, and his deirie,
His swine, his hors, his store, and his pultrie,
Were holly in this reves governing,
And by his covenant yave he rekening,
Sin that his lord was twenty yere of age;
Ther coude no man bring him in arerage.
Ther n'as baillif, ne herde, ne other hine,
That he ne knew his sleight and his covine:[4]
They were adradde of him, as of the deth.
His wonning was ful fayre upon an heth,

[1] Buyers. [2] Free from debt.
[3] Set all their caps, *i. e.* made fools of them. See verse 2145.
[4] Secret contrivances.

With grene trees yshadewed was his place.
He coude better than his lord pourchace
Ful riche he was ystored privily.
His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene[1] him of his owen good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mistere.
He was a wel good wright, a carpentere.
This reve sate upon a right good stot,[2]
That was all pomelee[3] grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of perse[4] upon he hade,
And by his side he bare a rusty blade.
Of Norfolk was this reve, of which I tell,
Beside a toun, men clepen Baldeswell.
Tucked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rode the hinderest of the route.

A sompnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fire-red cherubinnes face,
For sauseflem[5] he was, with eyen narwe.
As hote he was, and likerous as a sparwe,
With scalled browes blake, and pilled berd:
Of his visage children were sore aferd.
Ther n'as quiksilver, litarge, ne brimston,
Boras, ceruse, ne oile of tartre non,
Ne oinement that wolde clense or bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes sitting on his chekes.
Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,
And for to drinke strong win as rede as blood.
Than wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken had the win,
Than wold he speken no word but Latin.

[1] Lend. [2] A stallion. [3] Dappled. [4] Blue.

[5] I find this word in an old Fr. book of Physick, which I have quoted before in n. on ver. 165. "Oignement magistrel *pur sauseflemе* et pur chescune manere de *roigne*."—*Roigne* signifies any scorbutic eruption. So in the *Thousand notable things*, B. i. 70. "A *sauceflemme* or red pimpled face is helped with this medicine following."—Two of the ingredients are *quicksilver* and *brimstone*. In another place, B. ii. 20, *Oyle of Tartar* is said to take away cleane all spots, freckles, and filthy *wheales*." These last, I suppose, are what Chaucer calls *whelkes*. The original of the word seems to be pointed out in the following passage. Vit. R. ii. a Mon. Evesh. p. 169, "facies alba—interdum *sanguinis flouxmate* viciata.—*Tyrwhitt*.

A fewe termes coude he, two or three,
That he had lerned out of som decree;
No wonder is, he herd it all the day.
And eke ye knowen wel, how that a jay
Can clepen watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who so wolde in other thing him grope.
Than hadde he spent all his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*,[1] wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kind;
A better felaw shulde a man not find.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wine,
A good felaw to have his concubine
A twelve month, and excuse him at the full.
Ful prively a finch eke coude he pull.[2]
And if he found owhere a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have non awe
In swiche a cas of the archedekenes curse;
But if a mannes soule were in his purse;
For in his purse he shulde ypunished be.
Purse is the archedekens helle, said he.
But well I wote he lied right in dede:
Of cursing ought eche gilty man him drede.
For curse wol sle[3] right as assoiling[4] saveth,
And also ware him of a *significavit*.[5]
In danger[6] hadde he at his owen gise
The yonge girles[7] of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was of hir rede.
A gerlond hadde he sette upon his hede,
As gret as it were for an alestake:[8]
A bokeler hadde he made him of a cake.

With him ther rode a gentil Pardonere[9]
Of Rouncevall, his frend and his compere,[10]

[1] A customary question in old law-writings, after the statement of a case.
[2] "*I. e.* pluck a pigeon," as we should say. [3] Slay. [4] Absolution
[5] *I. e.* of a writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, which usually began, *Significavit* nobis venerabilis pater, &c.
[6] Within the reach or control of his office.
[7] This word is applied to both sexes in Chaucer, and therefore may mean the young men as well as the young women.
[8] A sign-post in front of an ale-house.
[9] A seller of indulgences. See below, on verse 710
[10] I can hardly think that Chaucer meant to bring his Pardoner from Roncevaux in Navarre, and yet I cannot find any place of that name in England. An *Hospital Beat. Marie de Rouncevalle in Charing*, London. is mentioned in the Monast. t. ii. 443. and there was a Runceval Hall in Oxford. So that perhaps it was the name of some fraternity.—*Tyrwhitt.*

That streit was comen from the court of Rome.
Full loude he sang, "Come hither, love, to me."[1]
This sompnour bare to him a stiff burdoun,
Was never trompe of half so great a soun.
This pardoner had here[2] as yelwe as wax,
But smoth it heng, as doth a strike of flax:
By unces heng his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shulders overspradde.
Ful thinne it lay, by culpons[3] on and on,
But hode, for jolite, ne wered he non,
For it was trussed up in his wallet.
Him thought he rode al of the newe get,[4]
Dishevele, sauf his cappe, he rode all bare.
Swiche glaring eyen hadde he, as an hare.
A vernicle[5] hadde he sewed upon his cappe.
His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote.
A vois he hadde, as smale as hath a gote.
No berde hadde he, ne never non shulde have,
As smothe it was as it were newe shave;
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwike unto Ware,
Ne was ther swiche an other pardonere.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,[6]
Which, as he saide, was oure ladies veil:
He saide, he hadde a gobbet[7] of the seyl
Thatte seint Peter had, whan that he went
Upon the see, till Jesu Crist him hent.[8]
He had a crois of laton[9] ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with these relikes, whanne that he fond
A poure persone dwelling up on lond,
Upon a day he gat him more moneie
Than that the persone gat in monethes tweie.
And thus with fained flattering and japes,
He made the persone, and the peple, his apes.

[1] Probably the beginning of some love-ditty popular in those days.
[2] Hair. [3] Shreds. [4] Fashion.
[5] A miniature copy of the picture of Christ, which is said to have been miraculously imprinted upon a handkerchief, preserved in the Church of St. Peter at Rome. The Pardoner, therefore, brings this in token of his pilgrimage to Rome. See Du Cange, v. *Veronica*.
[6] A pillow-case. [7] Morsel. [8] Took hold of him.
[9] A sort of mixed metal, of the colour of brass.

But trewely to tellen atte at last,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiast.[1]
Wel coude he rede a lesson or a storie,
But alderbest he sang an offertorie:
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He muste preche, and wel afile[2] his tonge,
To winne silver, as he right wel coude:
Therfore he sang the merier and loude.

Now have I told you shortly in a clause,
Th' estat, th' araie, the nombre, and eke the cause
Why that assembled was this compagnie
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrie,
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is time to you for to telle,
How that we baren us that ilke night,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alight.
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And all the remenant of our pilgrimage.
But firste I praie you of your curtesie,
That ye ne arette[3] it not my vilanie,
Though that I plainly speke in this matere,
To tellen you hir wordes and hir chere;
Ne though I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
Who so shall telle a tale after a man,
He moste reherse, as neighe as ever he can,
Everich word, if it be in his charge,
All speke he never so rudely and so large;
Or elles he moste tellen his tale untrewe,
Or feinin thinges, or finden wordes newe.
He may not spare, although he were his brother.
He moste as wel sayn o[4] word, as an other.
Crist spake himself ful brode in holy writ,
And wel ye wote no vilanie is it.

[1] It appears from hence that the Pardoner was an itinerant *ecclesiastick* of much the same stamp with *Frate Cipolla* in the Decameron, vi. 10. By the Stat. 22 H. VIII. c. 12, all *proctors and pardoners* going about in any country without sufficient authority are to be treated as vagabonds. Their impositions upon the credulity of the vulgar have been checked by several councils. See Du Cange, in v. *Quæstiarii* and *Quæstionarius*, under which general names *the venders of indulgences* are included.

[2] Polish. [3] Impute it to. [4] One.

Eke Plato sayeth, who so can him rede,
The wordes moste ben cosin to the dede.[1]
Also I praie you to forgive it me,
All have I not[2] sette folk in hir degree,
Here in this tale, as that they shulden stonde.
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

Gret chere made oure hoste us everich on,
And to the souper sette he us anon:
And served us with vitaille of the beste.
Strong was the win, and wel to drinke us leste.[3]
A semely man our hoste was with alle
For to han ben a marshal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe,[4]
A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wise and wel ytaught,
And of manhood him lacked righte naught.
Eke therto was he right a mery man,
And after souper plaien he began,
And spake of mirthe amonges other thinges,
Whan that we hadden made our rekeninges;
And saide thus; Now, lordinges, trewely
Ye ben to me welcome right hertily:
For by my trouthe, if that I shal not lie,
I saw nat this yere swiche a compagnie
At ones in this herberwe,[5] as is now.
Fayn wolde I do you mirthe, and I wiste how.
And of a mirthe I am right now bethought,
To don you ese, and it shall coste you nought.
Ye gon to Canterbury; God you spede,
The blisful martyr quite you your mede;
And wel I wot, as ye gon by the way,
Ye shapen you to talken and to play:
For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,
To riden by the way dombe as the ston:
And therfore wold I maken you disport,
As I said erst, and don you some comfort.
And if you liketh alle by on assent
Now for to stonden at my jugement:

[1] This saying of Plato is quoted again v. 17,156. Our author probably took it from Boethius, B. iii. Pr. 12. See also *Rom. de la R.* ver. 7465.
[2] *I. e.* if I have not. Cf. vs. 2477. "*All* be ye not of o complexion."
[3] It pleased us well. [4] See on v. 201.
[5] Harbour, *i. e.* inn, hostel.

And for to werchen[1] as I shal you say
To-morwe, whan ye riden on the way,
Now by my faders soule that is ded,
But ye be mery, smiteth of my hed.
Hold up your hondes withouten more speche.
Our conseil was not longe for to seche:
Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,[2]
And granted him withouten more avise,
And bad him say his verdit, as him leste.
Lordinges, (quod he) now herkeneth for the beste;
But take it nat, I pray you, in disdain;
This is the point, to speke it plat and plain,
That eche of you to shorten with youre way,
In this viage, shal tellen tales tway,
To Canterbury ward, I mene it so,
And homeward he shall tellen other two,
Of aventures that whilom han befalle.
And which of you that bereth him best of alle,
That is to sayn, that telleth in this cas
Tales of best sentence and most solas,[3]
Shal have a souper at youre aller cost
Here in this place sitting by this post,
Whan that ye comen agen from Canterbury.
And for to maken you the more mery,
I wol myselven gladly with you ride,
Right at min owen cost, and be your gide
And who that wol my jugement withsay,
Shall pay for alle we spenden by the way.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Telle me anon withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shapen me therfore.
This thing was granted, and our othes swore[4]
With ful glad herte, and praiden him also,
That he wold vouchesauf for to don so,
And that he wolde ben our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a souper at a certain pris;
And we wol reuled ben at his devise,
In highe and lowe: and thus by on assent,
We ben accorded to his jugement.

[1] To do. [2] *I. e.* To give it a long deliberation. [3] Comfort, pleasure.
[4] *I. e.* we swore our oaths, and prayed him. Our author too frequently omits the governing pronoun before the verb. Cf. vss. 1:57, 5042, 5054, &c.

And therupon the win was fette anon.
We dronken, and to reste wenten eche on.
Withouten any lenger tarying.
A-morwe whan the day began to spring,
Up rose our hoste, and was our aller cok,[1]
And gaderd us togeder in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than pas,
Unto the watering of Seint Thomas:
And ther our hoste began his hors arest,
And saide; lordes, herkeneth if you lest.
Ye wete your forword,[2] and I it record.
If even-song and morwe-song accord,
Let se now who shal telle the first tale.
As ever mote I drinken win or ale,
Who so is rebel to my jugement,
Shal pay for alle that by the way is spent.
Now draweth[3] cutte, or that ye forther twinne.
He which that hath the shortest shal beginne.
Sire knight, (quod he) my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cutte, for that is min accord.
Cometh nere, (quod he) my lady prioresse,
And ye, sire clerk, let be your shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth nought, lay hand to, every man.
Anon to drawen every wight began,
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cutte felle on the knight
Of which ful blith and glad was every wight;
And tell he must his tale as was reson,
But forword, and by composition,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this good man saw that it was so,
As he that wise was and obedient
To kepe his forword by his free assent,
He saide; sithen I shal begin this game,
What? welcome be the cutte a[5] goddes name.
Now let us ride, and herkeneth[6] what I say.
And with that word we riden forth our way;
And he began with right a mery chere
His tale anon, and saide as ye shul here.

[1] *I. e.* acted as cock for us all, woke us in time.
[2] You know your promise. [3] Draw. It is the second person plural.
[4] Before ye proceed farther. [5] In. [6] See on v. 837.

The Knightes Tale.

861—890.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus.[1]
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his time swiche a conquerour,
That greter was ther non under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree had he wonne.
What with his wisdom and his chevalrie,
He conquerd all the regne of Feminie,[2]
That whilom was ycleped Scythia;
And wedded the freshe quene Ipolita,
And brought hire home with him to his contree
With mochel glorie and gret solempnitee,
And eke hire yonge suster Emelie.
And thus with victorie and with melodie
Let I this worthy duk to Athenes ride,
And all his host, in armes him beside.
And certes, if it n'ere[3] to long to here,
I wolde have told you fully the manere,
How wonnen was the regne of Feminie,
By Theseus, and by his chevalrie;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Betwix Athenes and the Amasones;
And how asseged was Ipolita
The faire hardy quene of Scythia;
And of the feste, that was at hire wedding,
And of the temple at hire home coming.
But all this thing I moste as now forbere.
I have, God wot, a large feld to ere;
And weke ben the oxen in my plow.
The remenant of my tale is long ynow.

[1] For a copious account of the Theseida of Boccace, of which Chaucer has largely, but with excellent judgment, availed himself, see Tyrwhitt's Introduction, § ix.

[2] Womanhood, *i. e.* the kingdom of the Amazons. [3] If it were not.

I wil not letten eke non of this route.
Let every felaw telle his tale aboute,
And let se now who shal the souper winne.
Ther as I left, I wil agen beginne.
This duk, of whom I made mentioun,
Whan he was comen almost to the toun,
In all his wele and in his moste pride,
He was ware, as he cast his eye aside,
Wher that ther kneled in the highe wey
A compagnie of ladies, twey and twey,
Eche after other, clad in clothes blake:
But swiche a crie and swiche a wo they make,
That in this world n'is creature living,
That ever herd swiche another waimenting.
And of this crie ne wolde they never stenten,[1]
Till they the reines of his bridel henten,[2]
What folk be ye that at min home coming
Perturben so my feste with crying?
Quod Theseus; have ye so grete envie
Of min honour, that thus complaine and crie?
Or who hath you misboden,[3] or offended?
Do telle me, if that it may be amended;
And why ye be thus clothed alle in blake?
The oldest lady of hem all than spake,
Whan she had swouned, with a dedly chere,[4]
That it was reuthe[5] for to seen and here.
She sayde; lord, to whom fortune hath yeven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to liven,
Nought greveth us your glorie and your honour;
But we beseke you of mercie and socour.
Have mercie on our woe and our distresse.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentillesse,
Upon us wretched wimmen let now falle.
For certes, lord, ther n'is non of us alle,
That she n'hath ben a duchesse or a quene;
Now be we caitives, as it is wel sene:
Thanked be fortune, and hire false whele,
That non estat ensureth to be wele.
And certes, lord, to abiden your presence
Here in this temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han ben waiting all this fourtenight:
Now helpe us, lord, sin it lieth in thy might.

[1] So in Romeo and Juliet: "She *stinted*, and cried aye," *i. e.* left off weeping. [2] Seized. [3] Injured. [4] Appearance. [5] Piteous.

I wretched wight, that wepe and waile thus,
Was whilom wif to king Capaneus,
That starfe[1] at Thebes, cursed be that day:
And alle we that ben in this aray,
And maken all this lamentation,
We losten alle our husbondes at that toun,
While that the sege therabouten lay.
And yet now the olde Creon, wala wa![2]
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquitee,
He for despit, and for his tyrannie,
To don the ded bodies a vilanie,
Of alle our lordes, which that ben yslawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an hepe ydrawe,
And will not suffren hem by non assent
Neyther to ben yberied, ne ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despite.
And with that word, withouten more respite
They fallen groff,[3] and crien pitously;
Have on us wretched wimmen som mercy,
And let our sorwe sinken in thin herte.
This gentil duk doun from his courser sterte[4]
With herte pitous, whan he herd hem speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde all to-breke,
Whan he saw hem so pitous and so mate,[5]
That whilom weren of so gret estate.
And in his armes he hem all up hente,
And hem comforted in ful good entente,
And swore his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde don so ferforthly[6] his might
Upon the tyrant Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece shulde speke,
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,
As he that hath his deth ful well deserved.
And right anon withouten more abode
His banner he displaide, and forth he rode
To Thebes ward, and all his host beside:
No nere Athenes n'olde he go ne ride,

[1] Died.

[2] Well a day! an old Saxon interjection. The classical student should compare Sophocles' Antigone, and the Supplices and Phœnissæ of Euripides; but I have no space for classical parallels.

[3] Flat on the earth. [4] Leaped.

[5] Prostrated, half dead with grief. [6] Far forth, thoroughly.

Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay:
And sent anon Ipolita the quene,
And Emelie hire yonge sister shene[1]
Unto the toun of Athenes for to dwell:
And forth he rit; ther n'is no more to tell.
The red statue of Mars with spere and targe
So shineth in his white banner large,
That all the feldes gliteren up and doun:
And by his banner borne is his penon
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete[2]
The Minotaure which that he slew in Crete.
Thus rit this duk, thus rit this conquerour
And in his host of chevalrie the flour,
Til that he came to Thebes, and alight
Fayre in a feld, ther as he thought to fight.
But shortly for to speken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
In plaine bataille, and put his folk to flight:
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rent adoun bothe wall and sparre,[3] and rafter;
And to the ladies he restored again
The bodies of hir housbondes that were slain,
To don the obsequies, as was tho the gise.[4]
But it were all to long for to devise
The grete clamour, and the waimenting,
Whiche that the ladies made at the brenning
Of the bodies, and the gret honour,
That Theseus the noble conquerour
Doth to the ladies, whan they from him wente:
But shortly for to telle is min entente.
Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slaine, and wonnen Thebes thus,
Still in the feld he toke all night his reste,
And did with all the contree as him leste.
To ransake in the tas[5] of bodies dede,
Hem for to stripe of harneis and of wede,
The pillours[6] dide hir besinesse and cure,
After the bataille and discomfiture.
And so befell, that in the tas they found,
Thurgh girt with many a grevous blody wound,

[1] Beautiful, bright. [2] Stamped. [3] Bar.
[4] As was then the fashion. [5] Heap. [6] Pillagers.

Two yonge knightes ligging by and by,
Bothe in on armes, wrought ful richely:
Of whiche two, Arcita highte that on,
And he that other highte Palamon.
Not fully quik, ne fully ded they were
But by hir cote-armure, and by hir gere,
The heraudes knew hem wel in special,
As tho that weren of the blood real[1]
Of Thebes, and of sustren[2] two yborne.
Out of the tas the pillours han hem torne,
And han hem caried soft unto the tente
Of Theseus, and he ful sone hem sente
To Athenes, for to dwellen in prison
Perpetuel, he n'olde no raunson.
And whan this worthy duk had thus ydon,
He toke his host, and home he rit anon
With laurer crouned as a conquerour;
And ther he liveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lif; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in anguish and in wo,
Dwellen this Palamon and eke Arcite,
For evermo, ther[3] may no gold hem quite.
Thus passeth yere by yere, and day by day,
Till it felle ones in a morwe of May
That Emelie, that fayrer was to sene
Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,
And fresher than the May with floures newe,
(For with the rose colour strof hire hewe;
I n'ot which was the finer of hem two)
Er it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all redy dight.
For May wol have no slogardie a-night.
The seson priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte,
And sayth, arise, and do thin observance.
This maketh Emelie han remembrance
To don honour to May, and for to rise.
Yclothed was she freshe for to devise.
Hire yelwe here was broided in a tresse,
Behind hire back, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the gardin at the sonne uprist[4]
She walketh up and doun wher as hire list.

[1] Royal. [2] Sisters. [3] Where. [4] Reprising

She gathereth floures, partie white and red,
To make a sotel[1] gerlond for hire hed,
And as an angel hevenlich she song.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the chef dongeon,
(Wher as these knightes weren in prison,
Of which I tolde you, and tellen shal)
Was even joinant to the gardin wall,
Ther as this Emelie had hire playing.
Bright was the sonne, and clere that morwening.
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on high
In which he all the noble citee sigh,
And eke the gardin, ful of branches grene,
Ther as this freshe Emelia the shene[2]
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamon
Goth[3] in his chambre roming to and fro,
And to himselfe complaining of his wo:
That he was borne, ful oft he sayd, alas!
And so befell, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a window thikke of many a barre
Of yren gret, and square as any sparre,
He cast his eyen upon Emelia,
And therwithal he blent[4] and cried, a!
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that crie Arcite anon up sterte,
And saide, cosin min, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and dedly for to see?
Why cridest thou? who hath thee don offence?
For goddes love, take all in patience
Our prison, for it may non other be.
Fortune hath yeven[5] us this adversite
Some wikke[6] aspect or disposition
Of Saturne, by som constellation.
Hath yeven us this, although we had it sworn,
So stood the heven whan that we were born,
We moste endure: this is the short and plain.
This Palamon answerde, and sayde again;

[1] Subtle, cunningly devised.
[2] Beautiful.
[3] Goeth.
[4] Blenched, shrunk, started aside
[5] Given.
[6] Evil.

Cosin, forsoth of this opinion
Thou hast a vaine imagination.
This prison caused me not for to crie.
But I was hurt right now thurghout min eye
Into min herte, that wol my bane be.
The fayrnesse of a lady that I se
Yond in the gardin roming to and fro,
Is cause of all my crying and my wo.
I n'ot whe'r she be woman or goddesse.
But Venus is it, sothly, as I gesse.
And therwithall on knees adoun he fill,
And sayde: Venus, if it be your will
You in this gardin thus to transfigure,
Beforn me sorweful wretched creature,
Out of this prison helpe that we may scape.
And if so be our destinee be shape
By eterne word to dien in prison,
Of our lignage[1] have som compassion,
That is so low ybrought by tyrannie.
And with that word Arcita gan espie
Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that sight hire beautee hurt him so,
That if that Palamon were wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he sayde pitously:
The freshe beautee sleth[2] me sodenly
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place.
And but I have[3] hire mercie and hire grace,
That I may seen hire at the leste way,
I n'am but ded;[4] ther n'is no more to say.
This Palamon, whan he these wordes herd,
Dispitously he loked, and answerd:
Whether sayest thou this in ernest or in play?
Nay, quod Arcite, in ernest by my fay.[5]
God helpe me so, me lust full yvel pley.
This Palamon gan knit his browes twey.
It were, quod he, to thee no gret honour
For to be false, ne for to be traytour
To me, that am thy cosin and thy brother
Ysworne ful depe, and eche of us to other,

[1] Lineage. [2] Slayeth. [3] If I have not.
[4] I am nought but a dead man. [5] Faith.

That never for to dien in the peine,
Til that the deth departen[1] shal us tweine,
Neyther of us in love to hindre other,
Ne in non other cas, my leve[2] brother;
But that thou shuldest trewely forther me
In every cas, as I shuld forther[4] thee.
This was thin oth, and min also certain;
I wot it wel, thou darst it not withsain.
Thus art thou of my conseil out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly ben aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shal, til that min herte sterve.
Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt no so.
I loved hire firste, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conseil, and my brother sworne
To forther me, as I have told beforne.
For which thou art ybounden as a knight
To helpen me. if it lie in thy might,
Or elles art thou false, I dare wel sain.
This Arcita full proudly spake again.
Thou shalt, quod[5] he, be rather false than I.
And thou art false, I tell thee utterly.
For *par amour*[6] I loved hire first or thou.[7]
What wolt thou sayn? thou wisted nat right now
Whether she were a woman or a goddesse.
Thin is affection of holinesse,
And min is love, as to a creature:
For which I tolde thee min aventure
As to my cosin, and my brother sworne.
I pose, that thou lovedest hire beforne:
Wost thou not wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That who shall give a lover any lawe?
Love is a greter lawe by my pan,[8]
Then may be yeven of any erthly man:
And therfore positif lawe, and swiche decree
Is broken all day for love in eche degree.
A man moste nedes love maugre his hed.
He may not fleen it, though he shuld be ded,

[1] So in Froissart, v. i. c. 206. Edward III declares that he will not return "jusques à tant qu'il auroit fui de guerre, ou paix à sa suffisance, ou à son grand honneur, ou *il mourrait en la peine.*"—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Separate. [4] Forward.
[5] Quoth. [6] With love. [7] Before thou didst.
[8] Skull.

All be she maid, or widewe, or elles wif.
And eke it is not likely all thy lif
To stonden in hire grace, no more shal I:
For wel thou wost thyselven verailly,
That thou and I be damned to prison
Perpetuel, us gaineth no raunson.
We strive, as did the houndes for the bone,
They fought all day, and yet hir part was none.
Ther came a kyte, while that they were so wrothe,
And bare away the bone betwix hem bothe.
And therfore at the kinges court, my brother,
Eche man for himself, ther is non other.
Love if thee lust; for I love and ay shal:
And sothly, leve brother, this is al.
Here in this prison mosten we endure,
And everich of us take his aventure.
Gret was the strif, and long betwix hem twey,
If that I hadde leiser for to sey:
But to th' effect. It happed on a day,
(To tell it you as shortly as I may)
A worthy duk that highte Perithous,
That felaw was to this duk Theseus
Sin thilke day that they were children lite,[1]
Was come to Athenes, his felaw to visite,
And for to play, as he was wont to do.
For in this world he loved no man so:
And he loved him as tendrely again.
So wel they loved, as olde bokes sain,
That whan that on was ded, sothly to telle,
His felaw wente and sought him doun in helle:
But of that storie list me not to write.
Duk Perithous loved wel Arcite,
And had him knowe at Thebes yere by yere:
And finally at request and praiere
Of Perithous, withouten any raunson
Duk Theseus him let out of prison,
Frely to gon, wher that him list over all,
In swiche a gise, as I you tellen shall.
This was the forword,[2] plainly for to endite,
Betwixen Theseus and him Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were yfound
Ever in his lif, by day or night, o stound

[1] Little. [2] Agreement, covenant.

In any contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was accorded thus,
That with a swerd he shulde lese his hed;
Ther was non other remedie ne rede.[1]
But taketh his leve, and homeward he him spedde;
Let him beware, his nekke lieth to wedde.[2]
How gret a sorwe suffereth now Arcite?
The deth he feleth thurgh his herte smite;
He wepeth, waileth, crieth pitously;
To sleen himselt he waiteth prively.
He said; Alas the day that I was borne!
Now is my prison werse than beforne:
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
Not only in purgatorie,[3] but in helle.
Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
For elles had I dwelt with Theseus
Yfetered in his prison evermo.
Than had I ben in blisse, and not in wo.
Only the sight of hire, whom that I serve,
Though that I never hire grace may deserve,
Wold have sufficed right ynough for me.
O dere cosin Palamon, quod he,
Thin is the victorie of this aventure.
Ful blisful in prison maiest thou endure:
In prison? certes nay, but in paradise.
Wel hath fortune yturned thee the dise,
That hast the sight of hire, and I th'absence.
For possible is, sin[4] thou hast hire presence,
And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
That by some cas, sin fortune is changeable,
Thou maiest to thy desir somtime atteine.
But I that am exiled, and barreine
Of alle grace, and in so gret despaire,
That ther n'is erthe, water, fire, ne aire,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me hele, or don comfort in this,
Wel ought I sterve in wanhope[5] and distresse.
Farewel my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse.

[1] Counsel, plan of escape.
[2] Is in pawn, *i. e.*, his life is at stake.
[3] I need scarcely observe that Shakspeare has committed the same anachronism in the speech of the ghost in "Hamlet."
[4] For sithen, since. [5] Despair.

Alas, why plainen[1] men so in commune
Of purveyance[2] of God, or of fortune,
That yeveth hem ful oft in many a gise
Wel better than they can hemself devise?
Som man desireth for to have richesse,
That cause is of his murdre or gret siknesse,
And som man wold out of his prison fayn.
That in his house is of his meinie[3] slain.
Infinite harmes ben in this matere
We wote not what thing that we praien here.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
A dronken man wot wel he hath an hous.
But he ne wot which is the right way thider,
And to a dronken man the way is slider.[4]
And certes in this world so faren we.
We seken fast after felicite,
But we go wrong ful often trewely.
Thus we may sayen alle, and namely I,
That wende, and had a gret opinion,
That if I might escapen fro prison
Than had I ben in joye and parfite hele,[5]
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Sin that I may not seen you, Emelie,
I n'am but ded; ther n'is no remedie.
Upon that other side Palamon,
Whan that he wist Arcita was agon,
Swiche sorwe he maketh, that the grete tour
Resouned of his yelling and clamour.
The pure fetters[6] on his shinnes grete
Were of his bitter salte teres wete.
Alas! quod he, Arcita cosin min,
Of all our strif, God wot, the frute is thin.
Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thou yevest litel charge.
Thou maist, sith thou hast wisdom and manhede,
Assemblen all the folk of our kinrede,
And make a werre so sharpe on this contree,
That by som aventure, or som tretee,
Thou maist have hire to lady and to wif,
For whom that I must nedes lese my lif.
For as by way of possibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large of prison free,

[1] Lament. [2] Providence. [3] Domestics, servants.
[4] Slippery. [5] Perfect health. [6] The very fetters.

And art a lord, gret is thin avantage,
More than is min, that sterve here in a cage.
For I may wepe and waile, while that I live,
With all the wo that prison may me yeve,
And eke with peine that love me yeveth also,
That doubleth all my tourment and my wo.
Therwith the fire of jalousie up sterte
Within his brest, and hent him by the herte
So woodly, that he like was to behold
The box-tree, or the ashen ded and cold.
Than said he; O cruel goddes, that governe
This world with binding of your word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamant
Your parlement[1] and your eterne grant,
What is mankind more unto you yhold[2]
Than is the shepe, that rouketh[3] in the fold?
For slain is man, right as another beest,
And dwelleth eke in prison, and arrest,
And hath siknesse, and gret adversite,
And oftentimes gilteles parde.[4]
What governance is in this prescience,
That gilteles turmenteth innocence?
And yet encreseth this all my penance,
That man is bounden to his observance
For Goddes sake to leten of his will,
Ther as a beest may all his lust fulfill.
And whan a beest is ded, he hath no peine;
But man after his deth mote wepe and pleine,
Though in this world he have care and wo:
Withouten doute it maye stonden so.
The answer of this lete I to divines,
But wel I wote, that in this world gret pine is.
Alas! I see a serpent or a thefe,
That many a trewe man hath do meschefe,
Gon at his large, and wher him lust may turn.
But I moste ben in prison thurgh Saturn,
And eke thurgh Juno, jalous and eke wood,[5]
That hath wel neye destruied all the blood

[1] Your counsel, determination. [2] Beholden.
[3] Lieth close. So Conf. Ans. 72. "But now they *rucken* in her nest."
[4] *I. e.* Pardieux, "a common French oath, which most of the personages in Chaucer express very frequently in English, with as little ceremony as the Greeks used their 'By Jove,' and with as little meaning too."—*Tyrwhitt. gl.* [5] Mad.

Of Thebes, with his waste walles wide.
And Venus sleeth me on that other side
For jalousie, and fere of him Arcite.
Now wol I stent[1] of Palamon a lite,
And leten him in his prison still dwelle,
And of Arcita forth I wol you telle.
The sommer passeth, and the nightes long
Encresen double wise the peines strong
Both of the lover, and of the prisoner.
I n'ot which hath the wofuller mistere.
For shortly for to say, this Palamon
Perpetuelly is damned to prison,
In chaines and in fetters to ben ded;
And Arcite is exiled on his hed[2]
For evermore as out of that contree,
Ne never more he shal his lady see.
You lovers axe I now this question,
Who hath the werse, Arcite or Palamon?
That on[3] may se his lady day by day,
But in prison moste he dwellen alway.
That other wher him lust may ride or go,
But sen his lady shall he never mo.
Now demeth as you liste, ye that can,
For I wol tell you forth as I began.
Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful oft a day he swelt[4] and said alas,
For sen his lady shall he never mo.
And shortly to concluden all his wo,
So mochel sorwe hadde never creature,
That is or shal be, while the world may dure.
His slepe, his mete, his drinke is him byraft,
That lene he wex, and drie as is a shaft.[5]
His eyen holwe, and grisly to behold,
His hewe falwe,[6] and pale as ashen cold,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Than wold he wepe, he mighte not be stent.[7]
So feble were his spirites, and so low,
And changed so, that no man coude know

[1] Cease speaking of. [2] *I. e.*, on pain of his life.
[3] One. [4] Fainted, grew sick at heart. [5] An arrow.
[6] Complexion sallow. [7] Restrained.

His speche ne his vois, though men it herd.
And in his gere, for all the world he ferd
Nought only like the lovers maladie
Of Ereos,[1] but rather ylike manie,
Engendred of humours melancolike,
Beforne his hed in his celle fantastike.
And shortly turned was all up so doun
Both habit and eke dispositioun
Of him, this woful lover dan Arcite.
What shuld I all day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured had a yere or two
This cruel torment, and this peine and wo,
At Thebes, in his contree, as I said,
Upon a night in slepe as he him laid,
Him thought how that the winged god Mercury
Beforne him stood, and bad him to be mery.
His sleepy yerde[2] in hond he bare upright;
An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
Arraied was this god (as he toke kepe)
As he was whan that Argus[3] toke his slepe;
And said him thus: To Athenes shalt thou wende;
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.
And with that word Arcite awoke and stert.
Now trewely how sore that ever me smert,
Quod he, to Athenes right now wol I fare.
Ne for no drede of deth shal I not spare
To se my lady, that I love and serve;
In hire presence I rekke not to sterve.
And with that word he caught a great mirrour,
And saw that changed was all his colour,
And saw his visage all in another kind.
And right anon it ran him in his mind,
That sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladie the which he had endured,
He mighte wel, if that he bare him lowe,
Live in Athenes evermore unknowe,

[1] For Eros, the Greek name of Love.

[2] *I. e.*, his caduceus, or wand,

"The golden wand, that causes sleep to fly,
Or in soft slumber seals the wakeful eye,
That drives the ghosts to realms of night or day,
Points out the long uncomfortable way."

Pope's *Odyssey*, bk. 24.

[3] Mercury succeeded in closing his hundred eyes, and then slew him.

[4] Humbly.

And sen his lady wel nigh day by day.
And right anon he changed his aray,
And clad him as a poure labourer.
And all alone, save only a squier,
That knew his privitee and all his cas,
Which was disguised pourely as he was,
To Athenes is he gon the nexte way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffered his service,
To drugge[1] and draw, what so men wold devise.
And shortly of this matere for to sayn,
He fell in office with a chamberlain,
The which that dwelling was with Emelie.
For he was wise, and coude sone espie
Of every servant, which that served hire.
Wel coude he hewen wood, and water bere,
For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
And therto he was strong and big of bones
To don that any wight can him devise.
A yere or two he was in this service,
Page of the chambre of Emelie the bright;
And Philostrate[2] he sayde that he hight.
But half so wel beloved a man as he,
Ne was ther never in court of his degre.
He was so gentil of conditioun,
That thurghout all the court was his renoun.
They sayden that it were a charite
That Theseus wold enhaunsen his degre,
And putten him in worshipful service,
Ther as he might his vertues exercise.
And thus within a while his name is spronge
Both of his dedes, and of his good tonge,
That Theseus hath taken him of ner[3]
That of his chambre he made him a squier,
And gave him gold to mainteine his degre;
And eke men brought him out of his contre

[1] Drag.

[2] In the *Theseida* Arcite takes the name of *Penthee*. See the Discourse, &c., p. 83. The name of Philostrate might be suggested to Chaucer, either by Boccace's poem entitled *Philostrato*, or by the Decameron, in which one of the characters is so called. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, of which the principal subject is plainly taken from this tale, a Philostrate is also introduced, as a favourite servant of Theseus and master of his sports.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Nearer his person, into more confidential service.

Fro yere to yere ful prively[1] his rent.
But honestly and sleighly he it spent,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yere in this wise his life he ladde,
And bare him so in pees and eke in werre,
Ther n'as no man that Theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse let I now Arcite,
And speke I wol of Palamon a lite.
In derkenesse and horrible and strong prison
This seven yere hath sitten Palamon,
Forpined, what for love and for distresse.
Who feleth double sorwe and hevinesse
But Palamon? that love distraineth so,
That wood[2] out of his wit he goth for wo,
And eke therto he is a prisonere
Perpetuell, not only for a yere.
Who coude rime in English proprely
His martirdom? forsoth it am not I,
Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fell that in the seventh yere in May
The thridde night, (as olde bokes sayn,
That all this storie tellen more plain)
Were it by aventure or destinee,
(As, whan a thing is shapen, it shal be,)
That sone after the midnight, Palamon
By helping of a frend brake his prison,
And fleeth the cite faste as he may go,
For he had yeven drinke his gayler so
Of a clarre,[3] made of a certain wine,
With Narcotikes and Opie of Thebes fine,
That all the night though that men wold him shake,
The gailer slept, he mighte not awake.
And thus he fleeth as faste as ever he may.
The night was short, and faste by the day,
That nedes cost[4] he moste himselven hide.
And to a grove faste ther beside

[1] Privately. [2] Mad.

[3] Wine mixed with honey and spices, and afterwards strained till it is *clear*.—*Tyrwhitt, gl.*

[4] That nedes cost. The sense of this passage, as it stands in the MSS., is so obscure, that I am inclined to adopt the alteration proposed in Gl. Urr. v. NEDE. That nedes cast he moste himselven hide; *i. e.*, that he must needs *cast*, or contrive, to hide himself. But I find the same expression in L. W. 2686.

"Or *nedes coste* this thing mote have an ende."—*Tyrwhitt.*

With dredful foot[1] than stalketh Palamon.
For shortly this was his opinion,
That in that grove he wold him hide all day,
And in the night than wold he take his way
To Thebes ward, his frendes for to prete
On Theseus to helpen him to werreie.[2]
And shortly, eyther he wold lese his lif,
Or winnen Emelie unto his wif.
This is the effect, and his entente plein.
Now wol I turnen to Arcite agein,
That litel wist how neighe was his care,
Til that fortune had brought him in the snare.
The besy larke, the messager of day,
Saleweth[3] in hire song the morwe gray;
And firy Phebus riseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth of the sight,
And with his stremes drieth in the greves
The silver dropes, hanging on the leves,
And Arcite, that is in the court real[4]
With Theseus the squier principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
And for to don his observance to May,
Remembring on the point of his desire,
He on his courser, sterting as the fire,
Is ridden to the feldes him to pley,
Out of the court, were it a mile or twey.
And to the grove of which that I you told,
By aventure his way he gan to hold,
To maken him a gerlond of the greves,
Were it of woodbind or of hauthorn leves,
And loud he song agen the sonne shene.
O Maye, with all thy floures and thy grene,
Right welcome be thou faire freshe May,
I hope that I some grene here getten may.
And from his courser, with a lusty herte
Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he romed up and doun,
Ther as by aventure this Palamon
Was in a bush, that no man might him se,
For sore afered of his deth was he.
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite.
God wot he wold have trowed it ful lite.

[1] Timid, stealthy.
[2] Make war.
[3] Salutes.
[4] Royal

But soth is said, gon sithen are many yeres,
That feld hath eyen, and the wood hath eres.
It is ful faire a man to bere him even,
For al day meten men at unset steven.[1]
Ful litel wote Arcite of his felaw,
That was so neigh to herken of his saw,
For in the bush he sitteth now ful still.
Whan that Arcite had romed all his fill,
And songen all the roundel[2] lustily,
Into a studie he fell sodenly,
As don these lovers in hir queinte geres,[3]
Now in the crop,[4] and now doun in the breres,[5]
Now up, now doun, as boket in a well.
Right as the Friday, sothly for to tell,
Now shineth it, and now it raineth fast,
Right so can gery[6] Venus overcast
The hertes of hire folk, right as hire day
Is gerfull, right so changeth she aray.
Selde is the Friday all the weke ylike.
Whan Arcite hadde ysonge, he gan to sike,[7]
And set him doun withouten any more:
Alas! (quod he) the day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy cruelte
Wilt thou werrein Thebes the citee?
Alas! ybrought is to confusion
The blood real of Cadme and Amphion:
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man,
That Thebes built, or firste the toun began,
And of the citee firste was crouned king.
Of his linage am I, and his ofspring
By veray line, as of the stok real:
And now I am so caitif and so thral,[8]
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squier pourely.
And yet doth Juno me wel more shame,
For I dare not beknowe[9] min own name,
But ther as I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philostrat, not worth a mite.
Alas! thou fell Mars! alas! thou Juno,
Thus hath your ire our linage all fordo,

[1] A time for performing any action, previously fixed by message, order, summons, &c.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[2] Or *rondel*, "a rime or sonnet, which ends as it begins."—*Colgrave.*
[3] Strange fashions. [4] The top. [5] Briars.
[6] Changeable, inconstant. [7] Sigh. [8] A slave, a villain.
[9] Acknowledge.

Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
That Theseus martireth in prison.
And over all this, to slen me utterly,
Love hath his firy dart so brenningly
Ystiked[1] thurgh my trewe careful hert,
That shapen was my deth erst than my shert.[2]
Ye slen me with your eyen, Emelie;
Ye ben the cause wherfore that I die.
Of all the remenant of min other care
Ne set I not the mountance[3] of a tare,
So that I coud don ought to your plesance.
And with that word he fell doun in a trance
A longe time; and afterward up sterte
This Palamon, that thought thurghout his herte
He felt a colde swerd sodenly glide:
For ire he quoke, no lenger wolde he hide.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face ded and pale,
He sterte him up out of the bushes thikke,
And sayde: False Arcite, false traitour wicke,
Now art thou hent, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have all this peine and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful oft have told thee herebeforn,
And hast bejaped[4] her duk Theseus,
And falsely changed hast thy name thus;
I wol be ded, or elles thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emelie,
But I wol love hire only and no mo.
For I am Palamon thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepen have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede nought, that eyther thou shalt die,
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelie.
Chese which thou wolt, for thou shalt not asterte.[5]
This Arcite tho, with ful dispitous herte,
Whan he him knew, and had his tale herd,
As fers as a leon, pulled out a swerd,

[1] Pierced, plunged.

[2] Tyrwhitt (in *gl.*) compares T. iii. 734:

"O fatal sustren, which, *or any clothe*
Me shapen was, my destinee ne sponne."

And L. W. 2618:

"Sens first that day, *that shapen was my sherte*,
Or by the fatal sister had my dome."

[3] Amount, value. [4] Tricked. [5] Escape.

And sayde thus; By God that sitteth above,
N'ere it that thou art sike, and wood for love,
And eke that thou no wepen hast in this place,
Thou shuldest never out of this grove pace,
That thou ne shuldest dien of min hond.
For I defie the suretee and the bond,
Which that thou saist that I have made to thee.
What? veray fool, thinke wel that love is free,
And I wol love hire maugre[1] all thy might.
But, for thou art a worthy gentil knight,
And wilnest to darraine[2] hire by bataille,
Have here my trouth, to-morwe I will not faille,
Withouten weting of any other wight,
That here I wol be founden as a knight,
And bringen harneis right ynough for thee;
And chese the beste, and leve the werste for me.
And mete and drinke this night wol I bring
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if so be that thou my lady win,
And sle me in this wode, ther I am in,
Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me.
This Palamon answerd, I grant it thee.
And thus they ben departed til a-morwe,
Whan eche of hem hath laid his faith to borwe.
O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne,[3] that wolt no felaw have with thee!
Ful soth is sayde, that love ne lordship
Wol nat, his thankes,[4] have no felawship.
Wel finden that Arcite and Palamon.
Arcite is ridden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, or it were day light,
Ful prively two harneis hath he dight,
Both suffisant and mete to darreine
The bataille in the feld betwix hem tweine.
And on his hors, alone as he was borne,
He carieth all this harneis him beforne;
And in the grove, at time and place ysette,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.
Tho changen gan the colour of hir face.
Right as the hunter in the regne of Trace
That stondeth at a gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the lion or the bere,

[1] Despite. [2] Contend for.
[3] King. [4] With his good will.

And hereth him come rushing in the greves,[1]
And breking bothe the boughes and the leves,
And thinketh, here cometh my mortal enemy,
Withouten faille, he must be ded or I;
For eyther I mote slen him at the gappe;
Or he mote slen me, if that me mishappe:
So ferden[2] they, in changing of hir hewe,
As fer as eyther of hem other knewe.
Ther n'as no good day, ne no saluing.
But streit withouten wordes rehersing,
Everich of hem halpe to armen other,
As frendly, as he were his owen brother.
And after that, with sharpe speres strong
They foineden[3] eche at other wonder long.
Thou mightest wenen, that this Palamon
In his fighting were as a wood leon,
And as a cruel tigre was Arcite:
As wilde bores gan they togeder smite,
That frothen white as fome for ire wood.
Up to the ancle foughte they in hir blood.
And in this wise I let hem fighting dwelle,
And forth I wol of Theseus you telle.
The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveiance, that God hath sen beforne;
So strong it is, that though the world had sworne
The contrary of a thing by ya or nay,
Yet somtime it shall fallen on a day
That falleth nat efte in a thousand yere.
For certainly our appetites here,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
All is this ruled by the sight above.
This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirous,
And namely at the grete hart in May,
That in his bed ther daweth[4] him no day,
That he n'is clad, and redy for to ride
With hunte and horne, and houndes him beside.
For in his hunting hath he swiche delite,
That it is all his joye and appetite
To ben himself the grete hartes bane,
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.

[1] Groves.
[2] Fared.
[3] Made passes at each other.
[4] Dawneth.

Clere was the day, as I have told or this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
With his Ipolita, the fayre quene,
And Emelie, yclothed all in grene,
On hunting ben they ridden really.
And to the grove, that stood ther faste by,
In which ther was an hart as men him told,
Duk Theseus the streite way hath hold.
And to the launde he rideth him ful right,
Ther was the hart ywont to have his flight,
And over a brooke, and so forth on his wey.
This duk wol have a cours at him or twey
With houndes, swiche as him lust to commaunde.
And when this duk was comen to the launde,
Under the sonne he loked, and anon
He was ware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme,[1] as it were bolles[2] two.
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
So hidously, that with the leste stroke
It semed that it wolde felle an oke.
But what they weren, nothing he ne wote.
This duk his courser with his sporres smote,
And at a stert he was betwix hem two,
And pulled out a swerd and cried, ho!
No more, up peine of lesing of your hed.
By mighty Mars, he shal anon be ded,
That smiteth any stroke, that I may sen.
But telleth me what mistere[3] men ye ben,
That ben so hardy for to fighten here
Withouten any juge other officere,
As though it were in listes really.
This Palamon answered hastily,
And saide: Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the deth deserved bothe two.
Two woful wretches ben we, two caitives,
That ben accombred[4] of our owen lives,
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neyther mercie ne refuge.

[1] Furiously.
[2] Bulls. This is a very frequent comparison with the poets, especially when describing a quarrel about a love affair.
[3] What manner of men, of what profession. [4] Tired.

And sle me first, for seinte charitee.
But sle my felaw eke as wel as me.
Or sle him first; for, though thou know it lite,[1]
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banished on his hed,
For which he hath deserved to be ded.
For this is he that came unto thy gate
And sayde, that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed[2] thee ful many a yere.
And thou hast maked him thy chief squiere,
And this is he, that loveth Emelie.
For sith the day is come that I shal die
I make plainly my confession,
That I am thilke woful Palamon,
That hath thy prison broken wilfully.
I am thy mortal fo, and it am I
That loveth so hot Emelie the bright,
That I wold dien present in hire sight.
Therfore I axe deth and my jewise.[3]
But sle my felaw in the same wise.
For both we have deserved to be slain.
This worthy duk answerd anon again,
And sayd, This is a short conclusion.
Your owen mouth, by your confession
Hath damned you, and I wol it recorde.
It needeth not to peine you with the corde.
Ye shul be ded by mighty Mars the rede.[4]
The quene anon for veray womanhede
Gan for to wepe, and so did Emelie,
And all the ladies in the compagnie.
Gret pite was it, as it thought hem alle,
That ever swiche a chance shulde befalle.
For gentil men they were of great estat,
And nothing but for love was this debat.
And sawe hir blody woundes wide and sore;
And alle criden bothe lesse and more,
Have mercie, Lord, upon us wimmen alle.
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
And wold have kist his feet ther as he stood,
Till at the last, aslaked[5] was his mood,

[1] Thou little knowest it.
[2] Tricked.
[3] Punishment, a corruption of "justice," or of the Latin "judicium."
[4] Red, *i. e.* bloody.
[5] Relaxed, softened.

(For pitee renneth sone in gentil herte)
And though he first for ire quoke[1] and sterte,[2]
He hath considered shortly in a clause
The trespas of hem both, and eke the cause:
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
Yet in his reson he hem both excused;
As thus; he thoughte wel that every man
Wol helpe himself in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himself out of prison.
And eke his herte had compassion
Of wimmen, for they wepten ever in on:[3]
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And soft unto himself he sayed: fie
Upon a lord that wol have no mercie,
But be a leon both in word and dede,
To hem that ben in repentance and drede,
As wel as to a proud dispitous man,
That wol mainteinen that[4] he first began.
That lord hath litel of discretion,
That in swiche cas can no division:
But weigheth pride and humblesse after on.[5]
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agon,
He gan to loken up with eyen light,
And spake these same wordes all on hight.
The god of love, a! *benedicite*,
How mighty and how grete a lord is he?
Again his might their gainen non obstacles,
He may be cleped a God for his miracles.
For he can maken at his owen gise
Of everich herte, as that him list devise.
Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
That quitely[6] weren out of my prison,
And might have lived in Thebes really,
And weten[7] I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my might also,
And yet hath love, maugre hir eyen two,
Ybrought hem hither bothe for to die.
Now loketh, is not this an heigh folie?
Who maye ben a fool, but if he love?
Behold for Goddes sake that sitteth above,
Se how they blede! be they not wel araied?
Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, hem paied

[1] Shook. [2] Started. [3] Together.
[4] What. [5] As the same. [6] Freely. [7] Knew.

Hir wages, and hir fees for hir service.
And yet they wenen for to be ful wise,
That serven love, for ought that may befalle.
And yet is this the beste game of alle,
That she, for whom they have this jolite,
Con hem therfore as mochel thank as me.
She wot no more of alle this hote fare
By God, than wot a cuckow or an hare.
But all mote ben assaied hote or cold;
A man mote ben a fool other yonge or old;
I wot it by myself ful yore agon:
For in my time a servant was I on.
And therfore sith I know of loves peine,
And wot how sore it can a man destreine,
As he that oft hath ben caught in his las,[1]
I you foryeve all holly this trespas,
At request of the quene that kneleth here,
And eke of Emelie, my suster dere.
And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
That never mo ye shul my contree dere,[2]
Ne maken werre upon me night ne day,
But ben my frendes in alle that ye may.
I you foryeve this trespas every del,[3]
And they him sware his axing fayr and wel,
And him of lordship and of mercie praid,
And he hem granted grace, and thus he said:
To speke of real linage and richesse,
Though that she were a quene or a princesse,
Eche of you bothe is worthy douteles
To wedden whan time is, but natheles
I speke as for my suster Emelie,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousie,
Ye wot yourself, she may not wedden two
At ones, though ye fighten evermo:
But on of you, al be him loth or lefe,
He mot gon pipen in an ivy lefe:[4]
This is to say, she may not have you bothe,
Al be ye never so jalous, ne so wrothe.
And forthy[5] I you put in this degree,
That eche of you shall have his destinee,
As him is shape,[6] and herkneth in what wise;
Lo here your ende of that I shal devise.

[1] Snare. [2] Hurt. [3] Entirely.
[4] A proverb expressive of disappointment. [5] Therefore. [6] Fit.

My will is this for plat[1] conclusion
Withouten any replication,
If that you liketh, take it for the beste,
That everich of you shal gon wher him leste
Freely withouten raunson or dangere;
And this day fifty wekes, ferre ne nere,[2]
Everich of you shal bring an hundred knightes,
Armed for listes up at alle rightes
Alle redy to darrein[3] hire by bataille.
And this behete I you withouten faille
Upon my trouth, and as I am a knight,
That whether of you bothe hath that might,

[1] Plain.

[2] *Far or near.* The following remarks, in *Notes and Queries*, v. iii. p. 202, are very important:—"With respect to the time of year at which the tournament takes place, there seems to be an inconsistency." Theseus fixes 'this day fifty wekes' from the fourth of May, as the day on which the final contention must come off, and yet the day previous to the final contention is afterwards alluded to as "the lusty season of that May" which, it is needless to say, would be inconsistent with an interval of fifty ordinary weeks.

"But fifty weeks, if taken in their literal sense of 350 days, would be a most unmeaning interval for Theseus to fix upon,—it would almost require explanation as much as the difficulty itself; it is therefore much easier to suppose that Chaucer meant to imply the interval of a solar year. Why he should choose to express that interval by fifty, rather than by fifty-two, weeks may be surmised in two ways: first, because the latter phrase would be unpoetical and unmanageable; and secondly, because he might fancy that the week of the Pagan Theseus would be more appropriately represented by a lunar quarter than by a Jewish hebdomad.

"Chaucer sometimes makes the strangest jumble—mixing up together pagan matters and Christian, Roman and Grecian, ancient and modern; so that, although he names Sunday and Monday as two of the days of the week in Athens, he does so evidently for the purpose of introducing the allocation of the hours, alluded to before, to which the planetary names of the days of the week were absolutely necessary. But in the fifty weeks appointed by Theseus, the very same love of a little display of erudition would lead Chaucer to choose the hebdomas lunæ, or lunar quarter, which the Athenian youth were wont to mark out by the celebration of a feast to Apollo on every seventh day of the moon. But after the first twenty-eight days of every lunar month, the weekly reckoning must have been discontinued for about a day and a half (when the new moon was what was called 'in coitu,' or invisible) after which a new reckoning of sevens would recommence. Hence there could be but four hebdomades in each lunar month; and as there are about twelve and a half lunar months in a solar year, so must there have been fifty lunar weeks in one solar year."

[3] *Darregne*, to contend.

This is to sayn, that whether he or thou
May with his hundred, as I spake of now,
Sle his contrary, or out of listes drive,
Him shall I yeven Emelie to wive,
To whom that fortune yeveth so fayr a grace.
The listes shal I maken in this place,
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,[1]
As I shal even juge ben, and trewe.
Ye shal non other ende with me maken
That on of you ne shal be ded or taken.
And if you thinketh this is wel ysaid,
Saith your avis, and holdeth you apaid.[2]
This is your ende, and your conclusion.
Who loketh lightly now but Palamon?
Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who coud it tell, or who coud it endite,
The joye that is maked in the place
Whan Theseus hath don so fayre a grace?
But doun on knees went every manere wight,[3]
And thanked him with all hir hertes might,
And namely these Thebanes often sith.[4]
And thus with good hope and with herte blith
They taken hir leve, and homeward gan they ride
To Thebes, with his olde walles wide.
I trowe men wolde deme it negligence,
If I foryete to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that goth so besily[5]
To maken up the listes really,
That swiche a noble theatre as it was,
I dare wel sayn, in all this world ther n'as.
The circuite a mile was aboute,
Walled of stone, and diched all withoute.
Round was the shape, in manere of a compas
Ful of degrees, the hight of sixty pas,[6]
That whan a man was set on o degree
He letted not his felaw for to see.
Estward ther stood a gate of marbel white,
Westward right swiche another in th' opposite.
And shortly to concluden, swiche a place
Was never in erthe, in so litel a space,
For in the lond ther n'as no craftes man,
That geometrie, or arsmetrike can,

[1] Have mercy. [2] Satisfied. [3] Every man of them.
[4] Since. [5] Busily. [6] Foot-paces.

Ne portreiour, ne kerver of images,
That Theseus ne yaf[1] him mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and devise.
And for to don his rite and sacrifice,
He estward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus goddesse of love,
Don make an auter[2] and an oratorie;
And westward in the minde and in memorie
Of Mars he maked hath right swiche another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.[3]
And northward, in a touret on the wall,
Of alabastre white and red corall
An oratorie riche for to see,
In worship of Diane of chastitee,
Hath Theseus don wrought in noble wise.[4]
But yet had I foryetten to devise
The noble kerving, and the portreitures,
The shape, the contenance of the figures
That weren in these oratories three.
First in the temple of Venus maist thou see
Wrought on the wall, ful pitous to beholde,
The broken slepes, and the sikes[5] colde,
The sacred teres, and the waimentinges,[6]
The firy strokes of the desirinyes,
That loves servants in this lif enduren;
The othes, that hir covenants assuren.
Plesance and hope, desire, foolhardinesse,
Beaute and youthe, baudrie and richesse,
Charmes and force, lesinges[7] and flaterie,
Dispence,[8] besinesse, and jalousie,
That wered of yelwe goldes a gerlond,
And hadde a cuckow sitting on hire hond,
Festes, instruments, and caroles and dances,
Lust and array, and all the circumstances
Of love, which that I reken and reken shall,
By ordre weren peinted on the wall,
And mo than I can make of mention.
For sothly all the mount of Citheron,

[1] Gave. [2] Altar. [3] A carriage-load, a large quantity.
[4] This should rather be *don work*. The participle of the past time is put improperly for the infinitive mood. But the same inaccuracy occurs again in v. 4591.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[5] Sighs. [6] Lamentations. [7] Lies. [8] Expense.

Ther[1] Venus hath hire principal dwelling,
Was shewed on the wall in purtreying,
With all the gardin, and the lustinesse.[2]
Nought was foryetten the porter idelnesse,
Ne Narcissus the fayre of yore agon,
Ne yet the folie[3] of king Salomon,
Ne yet the grete strengthe of Hercules,
Th' enchantment of Medea and Circes,
Ne of Turnus the hardy fiers corage,
The riche Cresus caitif in servage.
Thus may ye seen, that wisdom ne richesse,
Beaute ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardinesse,
Ne may with Venus holden champartie,[4]
For as hire liste the world may she gie.
Lo, all these folk so caught were in hire las[5]
Til they for wo ful often said alas.
Sufficeth here ensamples on or two,
And yet I coude reken a thousand mo.
The statue of Venus glorious for to see
Was naked fleting in the large see,
And fro the navel doun all covered was
With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.
A citole[6] in hire right hand hadde she,
And on hire hed, ful semely for to see,
A rose gerlond fressh, and wel smelling,
Above hire hed hire doves fleckering.
Before hire stood hire sone Cupido,
Upon his shoulders winges had he two;
And blind he was, as it is often sene;
A bow he bare and arwes bright and kene.
Why shulde I not as wel eke tell you all
The purtreiture, that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the rede?
All peinted was the wall in length and brede
Like to the estres[7] of the grisly place,
That highte the gret temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilke colde and frosty region,
Ther as Mars hath his sovereine mansion.
First on the wall was peinted a forest,
In which ther wonneth[8] neyther man ne best,

[1] Where. This description of the temple of Venus is chiefly taken from Boccacio.—See *Tyrwhitt.*
[2] Mirth, gaiety.
[3] Folly.
[4] Partnership.
[5] Net, toils.
[6] Probably a kind of dulcimer.
[7] The inner parts.
[8] Dwelt.

With knotty knarry barrein trees old
Of stubbes[1] sharpe and hidous to behold;
In which ther ran a romble and a swough,[2]
As though a storme shuld bresten[3] every bough:
And dounward from an hill under a bent,[4]
Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burned stele, of which th' entree
Was longe and streite, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and swiche a vise;[5]
That it made all the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the dore shone,
For window on the wall ne was ther none,
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.
The dore was all of athament eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong[6]
With yren tough, and for to make it strong,
Every piler the temple to sustene
Was tonne-gret,[7] of yren bright and shene.
Ther saw I first the derke imagining
Of felonie, and alle the compassing;
The cruel ire, red as any glede,[8]
The pikepurse,[9] and eke the pale drede;
The smiler with the knit under the cloke,
The shepen[10] brenning with the blake smoke;
The tresen of the mordring in the bedde,
The open werre, with woundes all bebledde;
Conteke[11] with blody knif, and sharp manace.
All full of chirking[12] was that sory place.
The sleer of himself yet saw I there,
His herte-blood hath bathed all his here:[13]
The naile ydriven in the shode[14] on hight,
The colde deth, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple sate mischance,
With discomfort and sory contenance.

[1] Stocks. See Richardson's Dict., v. STUB.
[2] Sound. [3] Burst. [4] Declivity.
[5] In MS. A. *vrye*. Perhaps we should read *rese*, a Saxon word signifying *violence, impetuosity*. If so, we must also read, in the next line, *rese* for *rise*, with MS.—*Tyrwhitt*.
[6] Lengthways. [7] *I. e.*, of the circumference of a tun.
[8] A burning coal or ember. [9] Purse-stealer, cutpurse.
[10] Stable. [11] Contention.
[12] Chirping like a sparrow. Here it simply denotes a disagreeable noise.
[13] Hair. [14] The top hair of the head.

Yet saw I woodnesse[1] laughing in his rage,
Armed complaint, outhees,[2] and fiers outrage;
The carraine[3] in the bush, with throte ycorven,[4]
A thousand slain, and not of qualme[5] ystorven;[6]
The tirant, with the prey by force yraft;[7]
The toun destroied, ther was nothing laft.
Yet saw I brent the shippes hoppesteres,[8]
The hunte[9] ystrangled with the wilde beres:
The sow freting the child right in the cradel;
The coke yscalled,[10] for all his long ladel.
Nought was foryete[11] by th' infortune of Marte
The carter overridden with his carte;
Under the wheel ful low he lay adoun.
Ther were also of Martes division,
Th' armerer, and the bowyer, and the smith,
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his stith.[12]
And all above depeinted in a tour
Saw I conquest, sitting in gret honour,
With thilke sharpe swerd over his hed[13]
Yhanging by a subtil twined thred.
Depeinted was the slaughter of Julius,
Of gret Nero, and of Antonius:
All be that thilke time they were unborne,
Yet was hir deth depeinted therbefore,
By manacing of Mars, right by figure,
So it was shewed in that purtreiture
As is depeinted in the cercles above,
Who shal be slaine or elles ded for love.
Sufficeth on ensample in stories olde,
I may not reken hem alle, though I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte[14] stood
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood,

[1] Madness. [2] Outcry. [3] Carrion, dead corpses.
[4] Cut. [5] Sickness. [6] Dead. [7] Reft, taken away.
[8] Dancers. It is needless to trouble the reader with the various readings and interpretations of this passage. *To hoppe*, in Saxon, signified exactly the same as *to dance*, though with us it has acquired a ludicrous sense; and the termination *stre*, or *ster*, was used to denote a female, like *trix* in Latin. As, therefore, a *female* baker was called a *bakester*, a *female* brewer a *brewester*, a *female* webbe, or weaver, a *webbester*, so, I conceive, a *female* hopper, or dancer, was called an *hoppester* It is well known that a ship, in most languages, is considered as a female.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[9] Hunter. [10] Scalded. [11] Forgotten. [12] Anvil.
[13] An allusion to the well-known story of Damocles at the court of Dionysius of Corinth. [14] Chariot.

And over his hed ther shinen two figures
Of sterres, that ben cleped in scriptures,
That on Puella, that other Rubeus.[1]
This god of armes was araied thus:
A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete
With eyen red, and of a man he ete:
With subtil pensil peinted was this storie,
In redoubting[2] of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Diane the chaste
As shortly as I can I wol me haste,
To tellen you of the descriptioun,
Depeinted by the walles up and doun,
Of hunting and of shamefast chastitee.
Ther saw I how woful Calistope,[3]
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a woman til a bere,
And after was she made the lodesterre:
Thus it was peinted, I can say no ferre;
Hire sone is eke a sterre as men may see.
Ther saw I Dane[4] yturned til a tree,
I mene not hire the goddesse Diane,
But Peneus daughter, which that highte Dane.
There saw I Atteon an hart ymaked,
For vengeance that he saw Diane all naked:
I saw how that his houndes have him caught
And freten him, for that they knew him naught.
Yet peinted was a litel forthermore,[5]
How Athalante hunted the wilde bore,
And Meleagre, and many another mo,
For which Diane wroughte hem care and wo.
Ther saw I many another wonder storie,
The which me liste not drawen to memorie.[6]
This goddesse on an hart ful heye sete,
With smale houndes all aboute hire fete,
And undernethe hire feet she hadde a mone,
Wexing it was, and shulde wanen sone.
In gaudy grene hire statue clothed was,
With bow in hond, and arwes in a cas.

[1] The names of two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations in heaven: *Puella* signifieth Mars retrograde, and Rubeus, Mars direct.—*Tyrwhitt, gl.*
[2] Reverence. [3] Callisto.
[4] Daphne, who was turned into a laurel while escaping from the embraces of Apollo. [5] Further on. [6] I do not wish to relate.

Hire eyen caste she ful low adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A woman travailling was hire beforne,
But for hire childe so longe was unborne
Ful pitously Lucina gan she call,
And sayed; helpe, for thou mayst beste of all.
Wel coude he peinten lifly[1] that it wrought,
With many a florein he the hewes[2] bought.
Now ben these listes made, and Theseus
That at his grete cost arraied thus
The temples, and the theatre everidel,[3]
Whan it was don, him liked wonder wel.
But stint I wol[4] of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of hir returning,
That everich shuld an hundred knightes bring,
The bataille to darreine,[5] as I you told;
And til[6] Athenes, hir covenant for to hold,
Hath everich of hem brought an hundred knightes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.[7]
And sikerly[8] ther trowed many a man,
That never, sithen that the world began,
As for to speke of knighthood of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see and lond,
N' as, of so fewe, so noble a compagnie.
For every wight that loved chevalrie,
And wold, his thankes,[9] han a passant name,
Hath praied, that he might ben of that game,
And wel was him, that therto chosen was.
For if ther fell to-morwe swiche a cas,
Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knight,
That loveth *par amour*, and hath his might,
Were it in Englelond, or elleswher,
They wold, hir thankes, willen to be ther.
To fight for a lady, a! *benedicite*,
It were a lusty sighte for to se.
And right so ferden[10] they with Palamon.
With him ther wenten knightes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an habergeon,
And in a brest plate, and in a gipon;[11]

[1] To the life. [2] Colours. [3] Every bit. [4] I will stop.
[5] Fight, contend. [6] To. [7] At all points. [8] Surely.
[9] With his good will. [10] Fared. [11] A short cassock.

And som wol have a pair of plates large;
And som wol have a Pruce[1] sheld, or a targe;
Som wol ben armed on his legges wele,[2]
And have an axe, and som a mace of stele.
Ther n' is no newe guise, that it n' as[3] old.
Armed they weren, as I have you told,
Everich after his opinion.
Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon
Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace:
Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his hed
They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
And like a griffon loked he about,
With kemped[4] heres on his browes stout;
His limmes gret, his braunes[5] hard and stronge,
His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.
And as the guise was in his contree,
Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he,
With foure white bolles[6] in the trais.[7]
Instede of cote-armure on his harnais,
With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.[8]
His longe here was kempt behind his bak
As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.
A wreth of gold arm-gret,[9] of huge weigh.,
Upen his hed sate ful of stones bright,
Of fine rubins and of diamants.
Abut his char ther wenten white alauns,[10]
Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,[11]
To hunten at the leon or the dere,
And folwed him, with mosel[12] fast ybound,
Colered with gold, and torettes[13] filed round.
An hundred lordes had he in his route
Armed full wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,

[1] Prussian. [2] Well. [3] That it is not also.
[4] Combed. [5] Bones. [6] Bulls. [7] Traces.
[8] This somewhat reminds one of the accoutrements of a modern dragoon. [9] As thick as a man's arm.
[10] A species of mastiff, much esteemed in the 14th century. They were trained at Milan. [11] A young bullock. [12] Muzzle.
[13] Explained by Cotgrave to mean "the little ring," by which a hawk's *lure* or *leash* is fastened to the jesses. They were also used to hold-in dogs.

Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,
Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
Couched[1] with perles, white, and round and grete.
His sadel was of brent[2] gold new ybete;
A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging
Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
His crispe here like ringes was yronne,[3]
And that was yelwe, and glitered as the sonne.
His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,
His lippes round, his colour was sanguin,
A fewe fraknes[4] in his face yspreint,[5]
Betwixen yelwe and blake somdel ymeint,[6]
And as a leon he his loking caste.
Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.
His berd was wel begonnen for to spring;
His vois was as a trompe thondering.
Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
A gerlond fresshe and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bare for his deduit[7]
An egle tame, as any lily whit.
An hundred lordes had he with him there,
All armed save hir hedes in all hir gere,
Ful richely in alle manere thinges.
For trusteth[8] wel, that erles, dukes, kinges
Were gathered in this noble compagnie,
For love, and for encrese of chevalrie.
About this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.
And in this wise, these lordes all and some
Ben on the Sonday[9] to the citee come
Abouten prime,[10] and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he had brought hem into his citee,
And inned[11] hem, everich at his degree,
He festeth hem, and doth so gret labour
To esen[12] hem, and don hem all honour,

[1] Trimmed. [2] Burnt, *i. e.* wrought by fire.
[3] Run, signifying that it curled in ringlets. [4] Freckles.
[5] Were sprinkled. [6] Somewhat mingled. [7] Delight, pleasure
[8] Trust ye. [9] See the remarks quoted on vs. 1852.
[10] Early in the morning; the first part of the day.
[11] Lodged. [12] Make them comfortable.

That yet men wenen that no mannes wit
Of non estat ne coud amenden[1] it.
The minstralcie, the service at the feste,
The grete yeftes[2] to the most and leste,
The riche array of Theseus paleis,[3]
Ne who sate first ne last upon the deis,
What ladies fayrest ben or best dancing,
Or which of hem can carole best or sing,
Ne who most felingly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes liggen[4] on the floor adoun,
Of all this now make I no mentioun;
But of the effect; that thinketh me the beste;
Now cometh the point, and herkeneth if you leste.
The Sonday night, or day began to spring,
Whan Palamon the larke herde sing,
Although it n'ere not[5] day by houres two,
Yet sang the larke, and Palamon right tho
With holy herte, and with an high corage
He rose, to wenden on his pilgrimage
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,
I mene Venus, honourable and digne.
And in hire houre,[6] he walketh forth a pas
Unto the listes, ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and with humble chere
And herte sore, he sayde as ye shul here.
Fayrest of fayre, o lady min Venus,
Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,

[1] Improve. [2] Gifts. [3] Palace.
[4] Lie. [5] It was not yet day.

[6] And in hire houre. I cannot better illustrate Chaucer's Astrology than by a quotation from the old *Kalendrier de Bergiers*, edit. 1500. Sign. K. ii. b.:—"Qui veult savoir comme bergiers scevent quel planete regne chascune heure du jour et de la nuit, doit savoir la planete du jour qui veult s'enquerir; et la premiere heure temporelle du soleil levant ce jour est pour celluy planete. la seconde heure est pour la planete ensuivant. et la tierce pour l'autre, &c, in the following order: viz. Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna. To apply this doctrine to the present case. The first hour of the Sunday, reckoning from sunrise, belonged to the sun, the planet of the day; the second to Venus, the third to Mercury, &c., and continuing this method of allotment, we shall find that the twenty-second hour also belonged to the Sun, and the twenty-third to Venus; so that the hour of Venus really was, as Chaucer says, two houres before the sunrise of the following day.

Accordingly, we are told in ver. 2273, that the third hour after

Thou glader of the mount of Citheron,
For thilke love thou haddest to Adon[1]
Have pitee on my bitter teres smert,
And take myn humble praier at thin herte
Alas! I ne have no langage to tell
The effecte, ne the torment of min hell;
Min herte may min harmes not bewrey;[2]
I am so confuse, that I cannot say.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wele
My thought, and seest what harmes that I fele,
Consider all this, and rue upon my sore,
As wisly as I shall for evermore,
Emforth[3] my might, thy trewe servant be,
And holden werre alway with chastite:
That make I min avow, so ye me helpe.
I kepe nought of armes for to yelpe.[4]
Ne axe I nat to-morwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne vaine glorie
Of pris of armes, blowen up and doun,
But I wold have fully possessioun
Of Emelie, and die in hire servise;
Find thou the manere how, and in what wise.
I rekke[5] not, but it may better be,
To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in min armes.
For though so be that Mars is god of armes,
Your vertue is so grete in heven above,
That if you liste, I shal wel have my love.
Thy temple wol I worship evermo,
And on thin auter,[6] wher I ride or go,

Palamon set out for the temple of Venus, the Sun rose, and Emelie began to go to the temple of Diane. It is not said, that this was the hour of Diane, or the Moon, but it really was; for, as we have just seen, the twenty-third hour of Sunday belonging to Venus, the twenty-fourth must be given to Mercury, and the first hour of Monday falls in course to the Moon, the presiding planet of that day.

After this Arcite is described as walking to the temple of Mars, ver. 2369, *in the nexte houre of Mars*, that is, the *fourth* hour of the day. It is necessary to take these words together, for *the nexte houre*, singly, would signify the *second* hour of the day; but that, according to the rule of rotation mentioned above, belonged to Saturn, as the *third* did to Jupiter. The *fourth* was *the nexte houre of Mars*, that occurred after the hour last named.—*Tyrwhitt*.

[1] Adonis. [2] Not set forth my troubles. [3] Even with.
[4] Boast. [5] Care. [6] Altar.

I wol don sacrifice, and sires bete.[1]
And if ye wol not so, my lady swete,
Than pray I you, to-morwe with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Than rekke I not, whan I have lost my lif,
Though that Arcita win hire to his wif.
This is the effecte and ende of my praiere;
Yeve me my love, thou blisful lady dere.
Whan the orison was don of Palamon,
His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
Full pitously, with alle circumstances,
All tell I not as now his observances.
But at the last the statue of Venus shoke,
And made a signe, wherby that he toke,
That his praiere accepted was that day.
For though the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wist he wel that granted was his bone;
And with glad herte he went him home ful sone.
The thridde houre inequal[2] that Palamon
Began to Venus temple for to gon,
Up rose the sonne, and up rose Emelie,
And to the temple of Diane gan hie.
Hire maydens, that she thider[3] with hire ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fire they hadde,
Th' encense, the clothes, and the remenant all,
That to the sacrifice longen[4] shall.
The hornes ful of mede, as was the gise,
Ther lakked nought to don hire sacrifise.
Smoking the temple, ful of clothes fayre,
This Emelie with herte debonaire
Hire body wesshe with water of a well.
But how she did hire rite I dare not tell;
But it be any thing in general;
And yet it were a game to heren all;
To him that meneth wel it n'ere no charge:
But it is good a man to ben at large.
Hire bright here kembed was, untressed all.
A coroune on a grene oak cerial

[1] Prepare.

[2] In the astrological system of the time, the day, from sunrise to sunset, and the night, from unset to sunrise, being each divided into twelve hours, it is plain that the hours of the day and night were never equal, except just at the Equinoxes. The hours attributed to the Planets were of this *unequal* sort. See *Kalendrier de Berg.* loc. cit., and our author's treatise on the Astrolabe.—*Tyrwhitt.* [3] Thither. [4] Belong.

Upon hire hed was set full fayre and mete.
Two fires on the auter gan she bete,[1]
And did hire thinges, as men may behold
In Stace[2] of Thebes, and these bokes old.
Whan kindled was the fire, with pitous chere
Unto Diane she spake, as ye may here.
O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
To whom both heven and erthe and see is sene,[3]
Quene of the regne of Pluto, derke and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that min herte hast knowe
Ful many a yere, and wost[4] what I desire,
As kepe me fro thy vengeance and thin ire,
That Atteon aboughte[5] cruelly:
Chaste goddesse, wel wotest thou that I
Desire to ben a mayden all my lif,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wif.
I am (thou wost) yet of thy compagnie,
A mayde, and love hunting and venerie,[6]
And for to walke in the wodes wilde,
And not to ben a wif, and be with childe.
Nought wol I knowen compagnie of man.
Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and can,
For tho[7] three formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swiche love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I praie thee withouten more,
As[8] sende love and pees betwix hem two:
And fro me torne away hir hertes so,
That all hir hote love, and hir desire,
And all hir besy[9] torment, and hir fire
Be queinte,[10] or torned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt not do me grace,
Or if my destinee be shapen so,
That I shall nedes have on of hem two,
As[11] sende me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddesse of clene chastite,
The bitter teres, that on my chekes fall.
Sin thou art mayde, and keper of us all,

[1] Prepare. [2] Statius. [3] Beheld.
[4] Knowest. [5] Suffered for. [6] Hunting.
[7] Those. He alludes to the triple form of Hecate.
[8] So. See the note on vs. 3172. [9] Busy.
[10] Quenched.

My maydenhed thou kepe and wel conserve,
And while I live, a mayde I wol thee serve.
The fires brenne upon the auter clere,
While Emelie was thus in hire praiere:
But sodenly she saw a sighte queinte.[1]
For right anon on of the fires queinte,[2]
And quiked[3] again, and after that anon
That other fire was queinte, and all agon:
And as it queinte, it made a whisteling,
As don these brondes[4] wet in hir brenning.
And at the brondes ende outran anon
As it were blody dropes many on:
For which so sore agast was Emelie,
That she was wel neigh mad, and gan to crie,
For she ne wiste what it signified;
But only for the fere thus she cried,
And wept, that it was pitee for to here.
And therwithall Diane gan appere
With bowe in hond, right as an hunteresse,
And sayde: doughter, stint thin hevinesse.
Among the goddes highe it is affermed,
And by eterne word written and confermed,
Thou shalt be wedded unto on of tho,[5]
That han for thee so mochel[6] care and wo:
But unto which of hem I may not tell.
Farewel, for here I may no longer dwell.
The fires which that on min auter brenne,
Shal thee declaren[7] er that thou go henne,
Thin aventure of love, as in this cas.
And with that word, the arwes in the cas
Of the goddesse clatteren fast and ring,
And forth she went, and made a vanishing,
For which this Emelie astonied was,
And sayde; what amounteth this, alas!
I putte me in thy protection,
Diane, and in thy disposition.
And home she goth anon the nexte way.
This is the effecte, ther n'is no more to say.
The nexte houre of Mars folwing this
Arcite unto the temple walked is

[1] Strange.
[2] Was quenched.
[3] Quickened, became alive.
[4] Brands, torches.
[5] Those.
[6] Much.
[7] Inform thee.

Of fierce Mars, to don his sacrifise
With all the rites of his payen wise.[1]
With pitous herte and high devotion,
Right thus to Mars he sayde his orison.
O stronge god, that in the regnes cold
Of Trace[2] honoured art, and lord yhold,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes all the bridel in thin hond,
And hem fortunest as thee list devise,
Accept of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhed, that I may ben on of thine,
Then praie I thee to rewe upon my pine,[3]
For thilke peine,[4] and thilke hote fire,
In which thou whilom brendest[5] for desire
Whanne that thou usedest the beautee
Of fayre yonge Venus, freshe and free,
And haddest hire in armes at thy wille:
Although thee ones on a time misfille.
Whan Vulcanus had caught thee in his las,[6]
And fond the ligging by his wif, alas!
For thilke sorwe that was tho in thin herte,
Have reuthe[7] as wel upon my peines smerte.
I am yonge and unkonning,[8] as thou wost,
And, as I trow, with love offended most,
That ever was ony lives creature:
For she, that doth me all this wo endure,
Ne receeth[9] never, whether I sinke or flete.[10]
And wel I wot, or[11] she me mercy hete,[12]
I moste with strengthe win hire in the place:
And wel I wot, withouten helpe or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe not availle:
Than helpe me, lord, to-morwe in my bataille,
For thilke fire that whilom brenned thee,
As wel as that this fire now brenneth me;
And do, that I to-morwe may han victorie.
Min be the travaille, and thin be the glorie.
Thy soveraine temple wol I most honouren
Of ony place, and alway most labouren

[1] Pagan fashion. [2] Thrace. [3] Have pity on my grief.
[4] Trouble. [5] Didst burn. [6] Toils.
[7] Pity. [8] Ignorant. [9] Careth not.
[10] Swim, float. [11] Before. [12] Promise.

In thy plesance and in thy craftes strong.
And in thy temple I wol my baner hong,
And all the armes of my compagnie,
And evermore, until that day I die,
Eterne fire I wol beforne thee finde,
And eke to this avow I wol me binde.
My berd, my here[1] that hangeth long adoun,
That never yet felt non offension
Of rasour ne of shere, I wol thee yeve,
And ben thy trewe servant while I live.
Now, lord, have reuthe upon my sorwes sore,
Yeve me the victorie, I axe thee no more.
The praier stint[2] of Arcita the stronge,
The ringes on the temple dore that honge,
And eke the dores clattereden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somwhat him agaste.
The fires brent upon the auter bright,
That it gan all the temple for to light;
A swete smell anon the ground up yaf,[3]
And Arcita anon his hond up haf,[4]
And more encense into the fire he cast,
With other rites mo,[5] and at the last
The statue of Mars began his hauberke[6] ring;
And with that soun he herd a murmuring
Ful low and dim, that sayde thus, Victorie.
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anon unto his inne is fare,
As fayn as foul is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon swiche strif ther is begonne
For thilke granting, in the heven above,
Betwixen Venus the goddesse of love,
And Mars the sterne god armipotent,
That Jupiter was besy it to stent:[7]
Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew so many of aventures olde,
Fond in his olde experience and art,
That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
As sooth is sayd, elde[8] hath gret avantage
In elde is bothe wisdom and usage:
Men may the old out-renne, but not out-rede.[9]
Saturne anon, to stenten strif and drede

[1] Hair. [2] Ceased. [3] Gave. [4] Lifted.
[5] More. [6] Coat of mail. [7] To stop. [8] Aye. [9] Outwit.

Al be it that it is again his kind,
Of all this strif he gan a remedy find.
My dere doughter Venus, quod Saturne,
My cours, that hath so wide for to turne,
Hath more power than wot any man.
Min is the drenching in the see so wan,
Min is the prison in the derke cote,
Min is the strangel and hanging by the throte,
The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,
The groyning,[1] and the prive empoysoning.
I do vengeance and pleine[2] correction,
While I dwell in the signe of the leon.
Min is the ruine of the highe halles,
The falling of the toures and of the walles
Upon the minour,[3] or the carpenter:
I slew Sampson in shaking the piler.
Min ben also the maladies colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes[4] olde:
My loking is the fader[5] of pestilence.
Now wepe no more, I shal do diligence,
That Palamon, that is thin owen knight,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
Thogh Mars shal help his knight yet natheles.
Betwixen you ther mot sometime be pees:
All be ye not of o[6] complexion,
That causeth all day swiche division.
I am thin ayel,[7] redy at thy will;
Wepe now no more, I shal thy lust fulfill.
Now wol I stenten of[8] the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus goddesse of love,
And tellen you as plainly as I can
The gret effect, for which that I began.
Gret was the feste in Athenes thilke day,
And eke the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to ben in swiche plesance,
That all that monday justen they and dance,
And spenden it in Venus high servise.
But by the cause that they shulden rise
Erly a-morwe for to seen the fight,
Unto hir reste wenten they at night.

[1] Discontent. [2] Full. [3] Miner.
[4] Contrivances, plots. [5] Father. [6] One.
[7] Grandsire. [8] Have done with.

And on the morwe whan the day gan spring,
Of hors and harneis noise and clattering
Ther was in the hostelries all aboute:
And to the paleis rode ther many a route[1]
Of lordes, upon stedes and palfreis.
Ther mayst thou see devising of harneis
So uncouth[2] and so riche, and wrought so wele
Of goldsmithry, of brouding,[3] and of stele;
The sheldes brighte, testeres, and trappures;
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordes in paramentes[4] on hir courseres,
Knightes of retenue, and eke squieres,
Nailing the speres, and helmes bokeling,
Gniding[5] of sheldes, with lainers[6] lacing;
Ther as nede is, they weren nothing idel:
The fomy stedes on the golden bridel
Gnawing, and fast the armureres also
With file and hammer priking to and fro;
Yemen on foot, and communes many on
With shorte staves, thicke as they may gon;
Pipes, trompes, nakeres,[7] and clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;
The paleis ful of peple up and doun,
Here three, ther ten, holding hir questioun,
Devining of these Theban knightes two.
Som sayden thus, som sayd it shal be so;
Som helden with him with the blacke berd,
Som with the balled,[8] som with the thick herd;
Som saide he loked grim, and wolde fighte:
He hath a sparth[9] of twenty pound of wighte.
Thus was the halle full of devining
Long after that the sonne gan up spring.
The gret Theseus that of his slepe is waked
With minstralcie and noise that was maked,
Held yet the chambre of his paleis riche,
Til that the Theban knightes bothe yliche
Honoured were, and to the paleis fette.
Duk Theseus is at a window sette,
Araied right as he were a god in trone:[10]
The peple preseth thiderward ful sone

[1] Company. [2] Rare, uncommon, beautiful. [3] Embroidery.
[4] Trappings, ornamental furniture. See on vs. 10,583. [5] Rubbing.
[6] Straps, thongs. [7] A kind of brass drum used by the cavalry.
[8] Smooth, bald. [9] An axe, or halberd. [10] On his throne.

Him for to seen, and don high reverence,
And eke to herken his heste[1] and his sentence.
An heraud on a scaffold made an o,[2]
Til that the noise of the peple was ydo:
And whan he saw the peple of noise al still,
Thus shewed he the mighty dukes will
The lord hath of his high discretion
Considered, that it were destruction
To gentil blood, to fighten in the gise
Of mortal bataille now in this emprise:
Wherfore to shapen that they shul not die,
He wol his firste purpos modifie.
No man therfore, up peine of losse of lif,
No maner shot,[3] ne pollax, ne short knif
Into the listes send, or thider bring.
Ne short swerd for to stike with point biting
No man ne draw. ne bere it by his side.
Ne no man shal unto his felaw ride
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounden spere:
Foin[4] if him list on foot, himself to were.[5]
And he that is at meschief, shal be take,
And not slaine, but be brought unto the stake,
That shal ben ordeined on eyther side,
Thider he shal by force, and ther abide.
And if so fall, the chevetain be take
On eyther side, or elles sleth his make,[6]
No longer shal the tourneying ylast.
God spede you; goth forth and lay on fast.
With longe swerd and with mase[7] fighteth your fill.
Goth now your way; this is the lordes will.
The vois of the peple touched to the heven,
So loude crieden they with mery steven:[8]
God save swiche a lord that is so good,
He wilneth no destruction of blood.
Up gon the trompes and the melodie,
And to the listes rit[9] the compagnie

[1] Behest.

[2] An o. It may be doubted, whether this be an abbreviation of *Oyez*, or whether the interjection *Ho* were used to command a cessation of noise, as well as of fighting, &c. For the latter use, see vs. 1708, 2658, and Holinshed, p. 495. The duke of Norfolke was not fullie set forward, when the King cast down his warder, and the Heraldes cried, Ho, ho.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] No kind of darts or missiles.

[4] Make a pass. [5] Defend. [6] Mate, fellow.

[7] According to your fancy. [8] Voice. [9] Rode.

By ordinance, thurghout the cite large,
Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.
Ful like a lord this noble duk gan ride,
And these two Thebans upon eyther side:
And after rode the quene and Emelie,
And after that another compagnie
Of on and other, after hir degree.
And thus they passen thurghout the citee,
And to the listes comen they be time:
It n'as not of the day yet fully prime.
Whan set was Theseus ful rich and hie,
Ipolita the quene, and Emelie,
And other ladies in degrees aboute,
Unto the setes preseth all the route.
And westward, thurgh the gates under Mart,
Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
With baner red, is entred right anon;
And in the selve moment Palamon
Is, under Venus, estward in the place,
With baner white, and hardy chere and face.
In all the world, to seken up and doun,
So even without variatioun
Ther n'ere swiche compagnies never twey.[1]
For ther was non so wise that coude sey,
That any hadde of other avantage
Of worthinesse, ne of estat, ne age,
So even were they chosen for to gesse.
And in two renges[2] fayre they hem dresse.
Whan that hir names red were everich on,
That in hir nombre gile[3] were ther non,
Tho were the gates shette, and cried was loude;
Do now your devoir, yonge knightes proude.
The heraudes left hir priking up and doun.
Now ringen trompes loud and clarioun.
Ther is no more to say, but est and west
In gon the speres sadly in the rest;
In goth the sharpe spore[4] into the side.
Ther see men who can juste, and who can ride.
Ther shiveren shaftes upon sheldes thicke;
He feleth thurgh the herte-spone[5] the pricke.
Up springen speres twenty foot on highte;
Out gon the swerdes as the silver brighte.

[1] Never were two such companies. [2] Ranges. [3] Error.
[4] Spur. [5] Probably the concave part of the breast.—See *Tyrwhitt*.

The helmes they to-hewen, and to-shrede;
Out brest[1] the blod, with sterne[2] stremes rede.
With mighty maces the bones they to-breste.[3]
He thurgh the thickest of the throng gan threste.
Ther stomblen stedes strong, and doun goth all.
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
He foineth[4] on his foo with a tronchoun,
And he him hurtleth[5] with his hors adoun
He thurgh the body is hurt, and sith ytake[6]
Maugre his hed, and brought unto the stake,
As forword was, right ther he must abide.
Another lad is on that other side.
And somtime doth hem Theseus to rest,
Hem to refresh, and drinken if hem lest.
Ful oft a day han thilke Thebanes two
Togeder met, and wrought eche other wo:
Unhorsed hath eche other of hem twey.
Ther n'as no tigre in the vale of Galaphey,[7]
Whan that hire whelpe is stole, whan is it lite,[8]
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
For jalous herte upon this Palamon:
Ne in Belmarie ther n' is so fell leon,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jalous strokes on hir helmes bite;
Out renneth blood on both hir sides rede.
Somtime an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the sonne unto the reste went,
The stronge king Emetrius gan hent[9]
This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flesh to bite.
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawen to the stake.
And in the rescous[10] of this Palamon
The stronge king Licurge is borne adoun:
And king Emetrius for all his strengthe
Is borne out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,

[1] Burst. [2] Cruel. [3] Burst.
[4] Maketh a pass. [5] Pusheth at. [6] And therefore taken.
[7] There was a town called Galapha in Mauritania, upon the river Malva, which may perhaps have given name to the vale here meant. For Belmarie, see note on v. 57.—*Tyrwhitt.* [8] Little.
[9] Catch hold on, attach. [10] Rescue.

So hitte him Palamon or he were take:
But all for nought, he was brought to the stake:
His hardy herte might him helpen naught,
He moste abiden, whan that he was caught,
By force, and eke by composition.[1]
Who sorweth[2] now but woful Palamon?
That moste no more gon again to fight.
And whan that Theseus had seen that fight,
Unto the folk that foughten thus eche on,
He cried, ho! no more, for it is don.
I wol be trewe juge, and not partie.
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
That by his fortune hath hire fayre ywonne.
Anon ther is a noise of peple begonne
For joye of this, so loud and high withall,
It semed that the listes shulden fall.
What can now fayre Venus don above?
What saith she now? what doth this quene of love?
But wepeth so, for wanting of hire will,
Til that hire teres in the listes fill:
She sayde: I am ashamed doubtlees.
Saturnus sayde: Daughter, hold thy pees.
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his bone.
And by min hed thou shalt ben esed sone.
The trompoures[4] with the loude minstralcie,
The heraudes, that so loude yell and crie,
Ben in hir joye for wele of Dan[5] Arcite.
But herkeneth me, and stenteth noise a lite,
Whiche[6] a miracle ther befell anon.
This fierce Arcite hath of his helme ydon,
And on a courser for to shew his face
He priketh endelong the large place,
Looking upward upon this Emelie;
And she again him cast a frendlich eye,
(For women, as to speken in commune,
They folwen all the favour of fortune)
And was all his in chere,[7] as his in herte.
Out of the ground a fury infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And lepte aside, and foundred as he lepe:
And er that Arcite may take any kepe,[8]

[1] According to agreement. [2] Sorroweth. [3] Boon.
[4] Trumpeters. [5] Lord. [6] What. [7] Countenance. [8] Care.

He pight[1] him on the pomel of his hed,
That in the place he lay as he were ded,
His brest to-brosten[2] with his sadel bow.
As blake[3] he lay as any cole or crow,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborne out of the place
With herte sore, to Theseus paleis.
Tho was he corven out of his harneis,
And in a bed ybrought ful fayre and blive,[4]
For he was yet in memorie, and live,
And alway crying after Emelie.
Duk Theseus, with all his compagnie,
Is comen home to Athenes his citee,
With alle blisse and gret solempnite.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He n'olde not discomforten hem alle.
Men sayden eke, that Arcite shal not die,
He shal ben heled of his maladie.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther non yslain,
Al were they sore yhurt, and namely on,
That with a spere was thirled his brest bone.
To other woundes, and to broken armes,
Som hadden salves, and som hadden charmes:
And fermacies[5] of herbes, and eke save[6]
They dronken, for they wold hir lives have.
For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel all the longe night,
Unto the strange lordes, as was right,
Ne ther n'as holden no discomforting,
But as at justes or a tourneying;
For sothly ther n'as no discomfiture,
For falling n'is not but an aventure.
Ne to be lad by force unto a stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,
O person all alone, withouten mo,
And haried[7] forth by armes, foot, and too,
And eke his stede driven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothe yemen and eke knaves,
It was aretted[8] him no vilanie:
Ther may no man clepen it cowardie.

[1] Pitched. [2] Burst. [3] Black. [4] Quick.
[5] Medicines. [6] Sage. [7] Hurried. [8] Accounted.

For which anon duk Theseus let crie,
To stenten alle rancour and envie,
The gree[1] as wel of o side as of other,
And eyther side ylike, as others brother:
And yave hem giftes after hir degree,
And helde a feste fully dayes three:
And conveyed the kinges worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And home went every man the righte way,
Ther n'as no more, but farewel, have good day
Of this bataille I wol no more endite,
But speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the sore
Encreseth at his herte more and more.
The clotered blood, for[2] any leche-craft,
Corrumpeth,[3] and is in his bouke ylaft,[4]
That neyther veine-blood, ne ventousing,[5]
Ne drinke of herbes may ben his helping.
The vertue expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertue cleped natural,
Ne may the venime voiden, ne expell.
The pipes of his longes gan to swell,
And every lacerte[6] in his brest adoun
Is shent[7] with venime and corruption.
Him gaineth[8] neyther, for to get his lif,
Vomit upward, ne dounward laxatif;
All is to-brosten[9] thilke region;
Nature hath now no domination.
And certainly ther nature wol not werche,[10]
Farewel physike; go bere the man to cherche.[11]
This is all and som,[12] that Arcite moste die.
For which he sendeth after Emelie,
And Palamon, that was his cosin dere.
Than sayd he thus, as ye shuln after here.
Nought may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of all my sorwes smerte
To you, my lady, that I love most;
But I bequethe the service of my gost[13]

[1] Prize. [2] Despite. [3] Corrupts.
[4] Left in his body. [5] Cupping.
[6] A fleshy muscle, so called from its supposed resemblance to the tail of a lizard (*lacerta*). [7] Ruined. [8] Profiteth.
[9] Burst. [10] Work. [11] Church. [12] The sum total
[13] Spirit, ghost.

To you aboven every creature,
Sin that my lif ne may no lenger dure.
Alas the wo! alas the peines stronge,
That I for you have suffered, and so longe
Alas the deth! alas min Emelie!
Alas departing of our compagnie!
Alas min hertes quene! alas my wif!
Min hertes ladie, ender of my lif!
What is this world? what axen men to h
Now with his love, now in his colde grav
Alone withouten any compagnie.
Farewel my swete, farewel min Emelie,
And softe take me in your armes twey,
For love of God, and herkeneth what I s
I have here with my cosin Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon
For love of you, and for my jalousie.
And Jupiter so wis my soule gie,[1]
To speken of a servant proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely,
That is to sayn, trouth, honour, and knigh
Wisdom, humblesse, estat, and high kinre
Fredom, and all that longeth[2] to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I no
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you, and wol don all his lif.
And if that ever ye shal ben a wif,
Foryete[3] not Palamon, the gentil man.
And with that word his speche faille b
For from his feet up to his brest was com
The cold of deth, that had him overnome.
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital strength is lost, and all ago.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte sike and sore,
Gan faillen, whan the herte felte deth;
Dusked his eyen two, and failled his bret
But on his ladie yet cast he his eye;
His laste word was; Mercy, Emelie!

[1] So willed to guide my soul.
[2] Belongeth. [3] Forg

His spirit changed hous, and wente ther,
As I came never I cannot tellen wher.[1]
Therfore I stent, I am no divinistre;
Of soules find I not in this registre.
Ne me lust not th' opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is cold, ther Mars his soule gie.
Now wol I speken forth of Emelie.
Shright[2] Emelie, and houleth[3] Palamon,
And Theseus his sister toke anon
Swouning, and bare hire from the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien[4] forth the day,
To tellen how she wep both even and morwe?
For in swiche cas wimmen have swiche sorwe,[5]
Whan that hir housbonds ben fro hem ago,
That for the more part they sorwen[6] so,
Or elles fallen in swiche maladie,
That atte laste certainly they die.
Infinite ben the sorwes and the teres
Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres,
In all the toun for deth of this Theban:
For him ther wepeth bothe childe and man.
So gret a weping was ther non certain,
Whan Hector was ybrought, all fresh yslain
To Troy, alas! the pitee that was there,
Cratching of chekes, rending eke of here.
Why woldest thou be ded? thise women crie,
And haddest gold ynough, and Emelie.
No man might gladen this duk Theseus,
Saving his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutatioun.
As he had seen it chaungen up and doun,
Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse;
And shewed him ensample and likenesse.
Right as[7] ther died never man (quod he)
That he ne lived in erthe in som degree,
Right so ther lived never man (he seyd)
In all this world, that somtime he ne deyd.

Shakspere is equally cautious in making a like assertion, in Macbeth.—

"Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven, or to hell."

[2] Shrieks. [3] Howleth. [4] Tarry. [5] Sorrow
[6] Sorrow, grieve. [7] Just as, even as.

This world n'is but a thurghfare ful of wo
And we ben pilgrimes, passing to and fro:
Deth is an end of every worldes sore.
And over all this yet said he mochel more
To this effect, ful wisely to enhort[1]
The peple, that they shuld hem recomfort.
Duk Theseus with all this besy cure[2]
He casteth now, wher that the sepulture
Of good Arcite may best ymaked be,
And eke most honourable in his degree.
And at the last he toke conclusion,
That ther as first Arcite and Palamon
Hadden for love the bataille hem betwene,
That in that selve grove, sote[3] and grene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
His complaint, and for love his hote fires,
He wolde make a fire, in which the office
Of funeral he might all accomplise;
And lete[4] anon commande to hack and hewe
The okes old, and lay hem on a rew
In culpons,[5] wel araied for to brenne.
His officers with swifte feet they renne[6]
And ride anon at his commandement.
And after this, this Theseus hath sent
After a bere,[7] and it all overspradde
With cloth of gold, the richest that he hadde;
And of the same suit he cladde Arcite.
Upon his hondes were his gloves white,
Eke on his hed a croune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a sword ful bright and kene.
He laid him bare the visage on the bere,
Therwith he wept that pitee was to here.
And for the peple shulde seen him alle,
Whan it was day he brought him to the halle,
That roreth of the crying and the soun.
Tho came this woful Theban Palamon
With flotery[8] berd, and ruggy asshy heres,
In clothes blake,[9] ydropped all with teres,
And (passing over of weping Emelie)
The reufullestt[10] of all the compagnie.

[1] Encourage. [2] Care. [3] Sweet.
[4] Lett. [5] Logs. [6] Run.
[7] Bier. [8] Floatings. [9] Black. [10] Most sorrowing.

And in as much as the service shuld be
The more noble and riche in his degree,
Duk Theseus let forth three stedes bring,
That trapped were in stele all glittering,
And covered with the armes of Dan[1] Arcite.
And eke upon these stedes gret and white
Ther saten[2] folk, of which on bare his sheld,
Another his spere up in his hondes held;
The thridde bare with him his bow Turkeis,
Of brent gold was the cas and the harneis:
And riden forth a pas with sorweful chere
Toward the grove, as ye shul after here.

The noblest of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres carrieden the bere,
With slacke pas,[3] and eyen red and wete,
Thurghout the citee, by the maister strete,
That sprad was all with black, and wonder hie
Right of the same is all the strete ywrie.
Upon the right hand went olde Egeus,
And on that other side duk Theseus,
With vessels in hir hond of gold ful fine,
All ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wine;
Eke Palamon, with ful gret compagnie:
And after that came woful Emelie,
With fire in hond, as was that time the gise,
To don the office of funeral service.

High labour, and ful gret apparailling
Was at the service of that fire making,
That with his grene top the heven raught,[4]
And twenty fadom of brede[5] the armes straught:[6]
This is to sain, the boughes were so brode.
Of stre[7] first ther was laied many a lode.

But how the fire was maked up on highte,
And eke the names how the trees highte,
As oke, fir, birch, aspe, alder, holm, poplere,
Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestein,[8] lind,[9] laurere,
Maple, thorn, beche, hasel, ew, whipultre,[10]
How they were feld, shal not be told for me;
Ne how the goddes rannen up and doun
Disherited of hir habitatioun,

[1] Lord. [2] Sate. [3] Pace.
[4] Reached. [5] Breadth. [6] Extended.
[7] Straw. [8] Chesnut. [9] Linden.
[10] See Appendix.

In which they woneden[1] in rest and pees,
Nimphes, Faunes, and Amadriades;
Ne how the bestes, and the bridde[2]s alle
Fledden for fere, whan the wood gan falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was not wont to see the sonne bright;
Ne how the fire was couched first with stre,[3]
And than with drie stickes cloven a-thre,
And than with grene wood and spicerie,
And than with cloth of gold and with perrie,[4]
And gerlonds hanging with ful many a flour,
The mirre,[5] th' encense also with swete odour;
Ne how Arcita lay among all this,
Ne what richesse about his body is;
Ne how that Emelie, as was the gise,
Put in the fire of funeral service;
Ne how she swouned[6] whan she made the fire,
Ne what she spake, ne what was hir desire;
Ne what jewelles men in the fire caste,
Whan that the fire was gret and brente faste;
Ne how som cast hir sheld, and som hir spere,
And of hir vestimentes, which they were,
And cuppes full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that brent as it were wood;
Ne how the Grekes with a huge route
Three times riden all the fire aboute
Upon the left hond, with a loud shouting,
And thries with hir speres clatering;
And thries how the ladies gan to crie;
Ne how that led was homeward Emelie;
Ne how Arcite is brent to ashen cold;
Ne how the liche-wake[7] was yhold

[1] Dwelt. [2] Birds. [3] Straw.
[4] Jewels, precious stones. [5] Myrrh. [6] Fainted.
[7] The custom of *watching* with *dead bodies* (lice. SAX.) is probably very ancient in this country. It was abused, as other Wakes and Vigils were. See Du Cange, in v. VIGILLÆ. *In vigiliis circa corpora mortuorum* vetantur *choreæ et cantilenæ, seculares ludi et alii turpes et fatui.* Synod. Wigorn. an. 1240, c. 5. Chaucer seems to have confounded the Wake-plays, as they were called, of his own time with the Funeral-games of the Antients. So in Troilus, v. 303, Troilus says to Pandarus,

But of the fire and flambe funeral
In which my body brennen shall to glede
And of the *feste* and *playes palestral*
At my *vigile* I pray thee take good hede.—*Tyrwhitt.*

All thilke night, ne how the Grekes play.
The wake-plaies ne kepe I not to say:
Who wrestled best naked, with oile enoint,
Ne who that bare him best in no disjoint.[1]
I woll not tellen eke how they all gon
Home til Athenes whan the play is don;
But shortly to the point now wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By processe and by lengthe of certain yeres
All stenten[2] is the mourning and the teres
Of Grekes, by on general assent.
Than semeth me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, upon certain points and cas:
Amonges the which points yspoken was
To have with certain contrees alliance,
And have of Thebanes fully obeisance.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let senden after gentil Palamon,
Unwist of him, what was the cause and why:
But in his blacke clothes sorwefully
He came at his commandement on hie;
Tho sente Theseus for Emelie.

Whan they were set, and husht was al the place,
And Theseus abiden hath a space,
Or[3] any word came from his wise brest
His eyen set he ther as was his lest,
And with a sad visage he siked still,
And after that right thus he sayd his will.

The firste mover of the cause above
Whan he firste made the fayre chaine of love,
Gret was th' effect, and high was his entent;
Wel wist he why, and what therof he ment:
For with that fayre chaine of love he bond[4]
The fire, the air, the watre, and the lond
In certain bondes, that they may not flee:
That same prince and mover eke (quod he)
Hath stablisht, in this wretched world adoun,
Certain of dayes and duration
To all that are engendred in this place,
Over the which day they ne mow[5] not pace,
Al mow they yet dayes wel abrege.
Ther nedeth non autoritee allege,

[1] With no disadvantage. [2] Stopped
[3] Before that. [4] Bound. [5] Must.

For it is preved by experience,
But that me lust[1] declaren my sentence.
Than may men by this ordre wel discerne,
That thilke mover stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowen, but it be a fool,
That every part deriveth from his hool.[2]
For nature hath not taken his beginning
Of no partie ne cantel[3] of a thing,
But of a thing that parfit is and stable,
Descending so, til it be corrumpable.[4]
And therfore of his wise purveyance
He hath so wel beset his ordinance,
That speces of thinges and progressions
Shullen enduren by successions,
And not eterne, withouten any lie:
This maiest thou understand and seen at eye.
Lo the oke, that hath so long a norishing
Fro the time that it ginneth first to spring,
And hath so long a lif, as ye may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
Considereth eke, how that the harde stone
Under our feet, on which we trede and gon,
It wasteth, as it lieth by the wey.
The brode river somtime wexeth drey.[5]
The grete tounes see we wane and wende.
Than may ye see that all thing hath an ende.
Of man and woman see we wel also,
That nedes in on of the termes two,
That is to sayn, in youthe or elles age,
He mote be ded, the king as shall a page;
Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
Som in the large feld, as ye may see:
Ther helpeth nought, all goth that ilke wey:
Than may I sayn that alle thing mote dey.
What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
The which is prince, and cause of alle thing,
Converting alle unto his propre wille,
From which it is derived, soth to telle.
And here-againes no creature on live[6]
Of no degree availleth for to strive.
Than is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken vertue of necessite,

[1] I wish to declare. [2] Whole. [3] Fragment.
[4] Corruptible. [5] Dry. [6] Alive.

And take it wel, that we may not eschewe,
And namely that to us all is dewe.
And who so grutcheth[1] ought, he doth folie,
And rebel is to him that all may gie.[2]
And certainly a man hath most honour
To dien in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name.
Than hath he don his frend, ne him, no shame;
And glader ought his frend ben of his deth,
Whan with honour is yolden[3] up his breth,
Than whan his name appalled is for age;
For all foryetten is his vassallage.
Than is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dien whan a man is best of name.
The contrary of all this is wilfulnesse.
Why grutchen we? why have we hevinesse,
That good Arcite, of chivalry the flour,
Departed is, with dutee and honour,
Out of this foule prison of this lif?
Why grutchen here his cosin and his wif
Of his welfare, that loven him so wel?
Can he hem thank? nay, God wot, never a del,
That both his soule, and eke hemself offend,
And yet they mow hir lustes not amend.
What may I conclude of this longe serie,
But after sorwe I rede us to be merie,[4]
And thanken Jupiter of all his grace.
And er that we departen from this place,
I rede that we make of sorwes two
O parfit joye lasting evermo:
And loketh now wher most sorwe is herein,
Ther wol I firste amenden and begin.
Sister, (quod he) this is my full assent,
With all th' avis here of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owen knight,
That serveth you with will, and herte, and might
And ever hath don, sin ye first him knew,
That ye shall of your grace upon him rew,[5]
And taken him for husbond and for lord:
Lene me your hand, for this is oure accord.

[1] Grudgeth. [2] Guide. [3] Yielded.
[4] I opine that we should be merry. [5] Take compassion.

Let see now of your womanly pitee.
He is a kinges brothers sone pardee,[1]
And though he were a poure bachelere,
Sin he hath served you so many a yere,
And had for you so gret adversite,
It moste ben considered, leveth me.[2]
For gentil mercy oweth to passen[3] right.
Than sayd he thus to Palamon the knight;
I trow ther nedeth litel sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing.
Cometh ner, and take your lady by the hond.
Betwixen hem was maked anon the bond,
That highte matrimoine or mariage,
By all the conseil of the baronage.
And thus with alle blisse and melodie
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelie.
And God that all this wide world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dere ybought.
For now is Palamon in alle wele.
Living in blisse, in richesse, and in hele,
And Emelie him loveth so tendrely,
And he hire serveth al so gentilly,
That never was ther no word hem betwene
Of jalousie, ne of non other tene.[4]
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelie;
And God save all this fayre compagnie.

[1] *Pardieux*, by God.
[2] Believe me.
[3] To judge, to pass sentence.
[4] Grief, vexation.

THE MILLERES PROLOGUE.

3111–3140.

Whan that the Knight had thus his tale told,
In all the compagnie n'as ther yong ne old,
That he ne said it was a noble storie,
And worthy to be drawen to memorie;
And namely the gentiles everich on.
Our hoste lough and swore, So mote I gon,
This goth aright; unbokeled is the male;[1]
Let see now who shal tell another tale:
For trewely this game is wel begonne.
Now telleth ye, sire Monk, if that ye conne,
Somwhat, to quiten with the knightes tale.
The Miller that for-dronken was all pale,
So that unethes[2] upon his hors he sat,
He n'old avalen[3] neither hood ne hat,
Ne abiden no man for his curtesie,
But in Pilate vois[4] he gan to crie,
And swore by armes, and by blood, and bones,
I can a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the knightes tale.
Our hoste saw that he was dronken of ale,
And sayd; abide, Robin, my leve brother,
Som better man shall tell us first another:
Abide, and let us werken thriftily.
By Goddes soul (quod he) that wol not I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my way.
Our hoste answerd; Tell on a devil way;
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.
Now herkeneth, quod the miller, all and some:
But first I make a protestatioun,
That I am dronke, I know it by my soun:

[1] The budget is opened. [2] Uneasily. [3] To take off, to doff.
[4] *In Pilates vois.* In such a voice as Pilate was used to speak with in the Mysteries. Pilate, being an odious character, was probably represented as speaking with a harsh, disagreeable voice.—*Tyrwhitt.*

And therfore if that I misspeke or say,
Wite[1] it the ale of Southwerk, I you pray:
For I wol tell a legend and a lif
Both of a carpenter and of his wif,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.[2]
The Reve answerd and saide, Stint thy clappe.
Let be thy lewed dronken harlotrie.
It is a sinne, and eke a gret folie
To apeiren[3] any man, or him defame,
And eke to bringen wives in swiche a name.
Thou mayst ynough of other thinges sain.
This dronken miller spake ful sone again,
And sayde; Leve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wif, he is no cokewold.
But I say not therfore that thou art on;
Ther ben ful goode wives many on.
Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wif parde[4] as wel as thou,
Yet n'olde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Taken upon me more than ynough
As demen of myself that I am on;
I wol beleven wel that I am non.
An husbond shuld not ben inquisitif
Of Goddes privite, ne of his wif.
So he may finden Goddes foison[5] there,
Of the remenant nedeth not to enquere.

What shuld I more say, but this millere
He n'olde his wordes for no man forbere,
But told his cherles tale in his manere,
Me thinketh, that I shal reherse it here.
And therfore every gentil wight I pray,
For Goddes love as deme not[6] that I say
Of evil entent, but that I mote reherse
Hir tales alle, al be they better or werse,

[1] Blame the ale for it. [2] Made the fool of him.
[3] Impair, injure. [4] Pardieux. [5] Abundance.
[6] This phrase has occurred before: ver. 2304, As kepe me. Ver. 2319, As sende. I once thought that *as* in these cases was used elliptically for *do so much as;* but then the following verb must have been in the infinitive mood, whereas it is often in the imperative. See ver. 5773, As taketh. Ver. 6631, As doth. Ver. 13.352, As beth. I am therefore rather inclined to understand it in the sense of *so*, according to its original etymology. *As* is an abbreviation of *als*, and that of *al swa; sic omnino.* See ver. 5481, 5778, 7007.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or elles falsen som of my matere.
And therfore who so list it not to here,
Turne over the leef, and chese another tale,
For he shal find ynow bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentillesse,
And eke moralite, and holinesse.
Blameth not me, if that ye chese amis.
The miller is a cherl, ye know wel this,
So was the reve, (and many other mo)
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Aviseth you now, and put me out of blame;
And eke men shuld not make ernest of game.

The Milleres Tale.

Whilom ther was dwelling in Oxenforde
A riche gnof,[1] that gestes helde to borde,
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him there was dwelling a poure scoler,
Had lerned art, but all his fantasie
Was turned for to lerne astrologie,
And coude a certain of conclusions
To demen[2] by interrogations,
If that men asked him in certain houres,
Whan that men shulde have drought or elles shoures:
Or if men asked him what shulde falle
Of every thing, I may not reken alle.
This clerk was cleped hendy[3] Nicholas;
Of derne[4] love he coude and of solas;[5]
And therto he was slie and ful prive,[6]
And like a maiden meke for to se.
A chambre had he in that hostelrie
Alone, withouten any compagnie,
Ful fetisly[7] ydight with herbes sote,[8]
And he himself was swete as is the rote[9]

[1] Cuff. See Tyrwhitt's glossary. [2] Judge, determine.
[3] Courteous. [4] Secret. [5] Mirth, sport.
[6] Private. [7] Neatly. [8] Sweet. [9] Root.

Of licoris, or any setewale.[1]
His almageste,[2] and bokes gret and smale,
His astrelabre, longing for his art,
His augrim[3] stones, layen faire aparte
On shelves couched at his beddes hed,
His presse ycovered with a falding red.
And all above ther lay a gay sautrie,
On which he made on nightes melodie,
So swetely, that all the chambre rong:
And *Angelus ad virginem* he song.
And after that he song the kinges note;[4]
Ful often blessed was his mery throte.
And thus this swete clerk his time spent
After his frendes finding[5] and his rent.
This carpenter had wedded new a wif,
Which that he loved more than his lif:
Of eightene yere she was I gesse of age.
Jalous he was, and held hire narwe in cage,
For she was wild and yonge, and he was old,
And demed himself belike a cokewold.
He knew not Caton,[6] for his wit was rude,
That bade a man shulde wedde his similitude.
Men shulden wedden after hir estate,
For youthe and elde is often at debate.
But sithen he was fallen in the snare,
He most endure (as other folk) his care.
Fayre was this yonge wif, and therwithal
As any wesel hire body gent and smal.
A seint[7] she wered, barred all of silk,
A barme-cloth[8] eke as white as morwe milk

[1] The herb valerian.

[2] The "Great Syntax" of Ptolemy, an astronomical treatise, the Greek name of which has been corrupted by the Arabs into *almagesthi*. —*Tyrwhitt, gl.*

[3] Pebbles, or counters, used for numeration. The word is a corruption of the Arabic "algorithm."

[4] The kinges note. What this *note*, or *tune*, was, I must leave to be explained by the musical antiquaries. *Angelus ad virginem*, I suppose, was *Ave Maria*, &c.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[5] *I. e.* supplying.

[6] The calling of this author *Caton*, shows that he was more studied in French than in Latin. See below, ver. 9251, 14,946, 16,155. Who he was, or of what age, is uncertain: but his authority, four or five hundred years ago, seems to have been as great as if he had really been the famous censor of Rome. However, the maxim here alluded to is not properly one of Cato's, but I find it in a kind of supplement to the moral distichs.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[7] Girdle.

[8] Apron.

Upon hire lendes,[1] ful of many a gore.[2]
White was hire smok, and brouded all before
And eke behind on hire colere[3] aboute
Of cole-black silk, within and eke withoute.
The tapes of hire white volupere[4]
Were of the same suit of hire colere;
Hire fillet brode of silk, and set full hye:
And sikerly she had a likerous eye.
Ful smal ypulled were hire browes two,
And they were bent, and black as any slo.
She was wel more blisful on to see
Than is the newe perjenete[5] tree;
And softer than the wolle is of a wether.
And by hire girdel heng a purse of lether,
Tasseled with silk, and perled with latoun.[6]
In all this world to seken up and doun
Ther n'is no man so wise, that coude thenche
So gay a popelot,[7] or swiche a wenche.
Ful brighter was the shining of hire hewe,
Than in the tour the noble yforged newe.
But of hire song, it was as loud and yerne,[8]
As any swalow sitting on a berne.[9]
Therto she coude skip, and make a game,
As any kid or calf following his dame.
Hire mouth was swete as braket[10] or the meth,[11]
Or hord of apples, laid in hay or heth.[12]

[1] Loins.

[2] It has been suggested to me by a learned person, whom I have not the honour to know, that *gore* is a common name for a *slip* of cloth or linen, which is inserted in order to widen a garment in any particular place. GOOR OF A CLOTH.—*Lucinia*, Prompt. Parv. See also the glossary to Kennet's Paroch. Antiq. in V. *Gore*. This sense will suit very well with the context of ver. 3237, but hardly I think with that of ver. 13,719; unless we suppose that *gore* is put here for *shirt*, because *shirts* have usually *gores* in them. This expression would certainly be very awkward, and unlike Chaucer's general manner, but in this place, *the Rime of Sire Topas*, he may be supposed to have taken it purposely from one of those old romances which are the objects of his ridicule.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Collar. [4] A woman's cap. [5] A young pear.

[6] Ornamented with latoun in the shape of pearls. *Laton* was a kind of mixed metal.

[7] Young butterfly, or puppet, according to its derivation.

[8] Brisk, fresh. [9] Barn.

[10] A sweet drink made of the wort of ale, honey, and spice.

[11] Mead. [12] Heath.

Winsing she was, as is a joly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A broche she bare upon hire low colere,
As brode as is the bosse of a bokelere.
Hire shoon were laced on her legges hie;
She was a primerole,[1] a piggesnie,[2]
For any lord to liggen in his bedde,
Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.
Now sire, and eft sire, so befell the cas,
That on a day this hendy[3] Nicholas
Fel with this yonge wif to rage and pleye,
While that hire husbond was at Oseney,
As clerkes ben ful subtil and ful queint.
And prively he caught hire by the queint,
And sayde; Ywis, but if I have my will,
For derne[4] love of thee, lemman,[5] I spill.[6]
And helde hire faste by the hanche bones,
And sayde; Lemman, love me wel at ones,
Or I wol dien, al so God me save.
And she sprong as a colt doth in the trave:[7]
And with hire hed she writhed faste away,
And sayde; I wol not kisse thee by my fay.
Why let be, (quod she) let be, Nicholas,
Or I wol crie out harow[8] and alas.
Do way your hondes for your curtesie.
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crie,
And spake so faire, and profered him so fast,
That she hire love him granted at the last,
And swore hire oth by Seint Thomas of Kent,
That she wold ben at his commandement,
Whan that she may hire leiser wel espie.
Myn husbond is so ful of jalousie,
That but ye waiten wel, and be prive,
I wot right wel I n'am but ded, quod she.
Ye mosten be ful derne as in this cas.
Nay, therof care you not, quod Nicholas.

[1] A primrose.

[2] The Romans used *oculus* as a term of endearment, and perhaps *piggesnie*, in vulgar language, only means *ocellus*; the eyes of that animal being remarkably small.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Courteous. [4] Secret. [5] My love. [6] I perish.

[7] A frame, in which restive horses are put to steady them.

[8] Aloud, something like of "Hallo!" But see *Tyrwhitt.*

A clerk had litherly[1] beset his while,
But if he coude a carpenter begile.
And thus they were accorded and ysworne
To waite a time, as I have said beforne.
Whan Nicholas had don thus every del,
And thacked hire about the lendes wel,
He kissed hire swete, and taketh his sautrie,
And plaieth fast, and maketh melodie.
Than fell it thus, that to the parish cherche
(Of Cristes owen werkes for to werche)[2]
This good wif went upon a holy day:
Hire forehed shone as bright as any day,
So was it washen, whan she lete hire werk.
Now was ther of that chirche a parish clerk,
The which that was ycleped Absolon.
Crulle[3] was his here, and as the gold it shon,
And strouted[4] as a fanne large and brode;
Ful streight and even lay his joly shode.[5]
His rode was red, his eyen grey as goos,
With Poules windowes[7] corven on his shoos.
In hosen red he went ful fetisly.
Yclad he was ful smal and proprely,
All in a kirtel of a light waget;[8]
Ful faire and thicke ben the pointes set.
And therupon he had a gay surplise,
As white as is the blosme upon the rise.[9]
A mery child he was, so God me save;
Wel coud he leten blod, and clippe, and shave,
And make a chartre[10] of lond, and a quitance.
In twenty manere coud he trip and dance,

[1] Ill.
[2] Work, do.
[3] Curled.
[4] Strutted.
[5] Pair.
[6] Complexion.

[7] Perhaps this means, that his shoes were cut in squares, like panes of glass. Bale mentions *fenestratos calceos* as making part of the habit of the habit of the Franciscans. Cent. iv. 27 and 91. They also occur in the Cistercian Statutes an. 1529, and the monks are forbidden to wear them. Du Cange, in v. CALCEI FENESTRATI.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[8] Or, *Watchet.* Skinner explains *Watchet* to mean *a colour*, a whitish blue; but in this place it seems rather to mean some kind of *cloth;* denominated, perhaps, from the town of *Watchet*, in Somersetshire. Instead of *tight*, some MSS. read *fin;* and MS. A. *whit.* This last epithet would be quite inconsistent with Skinner's explanation.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[9] Small twigs or bushes.
[10] Charter.

(After the scole of Oxenforde tho)[1]
And with his legges casten to and fro;
And playen songes on a smal ribible;[2]
Thereto he song somtime[3] a loud quinible.
And as wel coud he play on a giterne.
In all the toun n'as brewhous ne taverne,
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther as that any gaillard[4] tapstere[5] was.
But soth to say he was somdel squaimous[6]
Of farting, and of speche dangerous.
This Absolon, that joly was and gay,
Goth with a censer on the holy day,
Censing the wives of the parish faste;
And many a lovely loke he on hem caste,
And namely on this carpenteres wif:
To loke on hire him thought a mery lif.
She was so propre, and swete, and likerous.
I dare wel sain, if she had ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wolde hire hente[7] anon.
This parish clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte swiche a love-longing,
That of no wif toke he non offering;
For curtesie, he sayd, he n'olde non.
The moone at night ful clere and brighte shon,
And Absolon his giterne hath ytake,
For paramours[8] he thoughte for to wake.
And forth he goth, jolif and amorous
Til he came to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cockes had yerow,
And dressed him up by a shot[9] window,
That was upon the carpenteres wal.
He singeth in his vois gentil and smal;
Now, dere lady,—if thy wille be,[10]
I pray you that ye—wol rewe[11] on me;
Ful wel wel accordant to his giterning.
This carpenter awoke, and herd him sing,

[1] The school of Oxford seems to have been in much the same estimation for its dancing as that of Stratford for its French. See before, ver. 125. *Oxenforde* is a Quadrisyllable. *Oxnafords.* SAX.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[2] What instrument this was, is not known.
[3] *I. e.*, sometimes to. The quinible was also a musical instrument.
[4] Gay. [5] A female keeper of a *tap*, or tavern.
[6] Squeamish. [7] Seize. [8] Lovers. [9] Shut.
[10] These two verses should probably form four short lines.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[11] Take pity.

And spake unto his wif, and said anon,
What, Alison, heres thou not Absolon,
That chanteth thus under our boures[1] wal?
And she answerd hire husbond therewithal;
Yes, God wot, John, I here him every del.
This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than wel
Fro day to day this joly Absolon
So loveth hire, that him is wo-begon.
He waketh all the night, and all the day,
He kembeth his lockes brode, and made him gay.
He woeth hire by menes and brocage,[2]
And swore he wolde ben hire owen page.
He singeth brokking[3] as a nightingale.
He sent hire pinnes, methe, and spiced ale,
And wafres piping hot out of the glede:[4]
And for she was of toun, he profered mede.
For som folk wol be wonnen for richesse,
And som for strokes, and som with gentillesse.
Somtime to shew his lightnesse and maistrie
He plaieth Herode on a skaffold hie.[5]
But what availeth him as in this cas?
So loveth she this hendy Nicholas,
That Absolon may blow the buckes horne:[6]
He ne had for his labour but a scorne.
And thus she maketh Absolon hire ape,
And all his ernest turneth to a jape.
Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lie;
Men say right thus alway; the neighe slie[7]
Maketh oft time the fer leef to be lothe.
For though that Absolon be wood[9] or wrothe,
Because that he fer was from hire sight,
This neighe Nicholas stood in his light.
Now bere thee wel, thou hendy Nicholas,
For Absolon may waile and sing alas.
And so befell that on a Saturday,
This carpenter was gon to Osenay,
And hendy Nicholas and Alison
Accorded ben to this conclusion,

[1] House.
[2] By go-betweens and agents.
[3] Quivering.
[4] The embers.
[5] This is much in character. The parish-clerks had always a principal share in the representation of mysteries.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[6] *I. e.*, fail, profit nothing.
[7] Cunning one.
[8] Distant.
[9] Mad.

That Nicholas shal shapen him a wile
This sely[1] jalous husbond to begile;
And if so were the game went aright,
She shuld slepe in his armes alle night,
For this was hire desire and his also.
And right anon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wolde tarie,
But doth ful softe unto his chambre carie
Both mete and drinke for a day or twey.
And to hire husbond bad hire for to sey,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
She shulde say, she n'iste not wher he was;
Of all the day she saw him not with eye.
She trowed he was in som maladie,
For for no crie hire maiden coud him calle
He n'olde answer, for nothing that might falle.
Thus passeth forth all thilke Saturday,
That Nicholas still in his chambre lay,
And ete, and slept, and dide what him list
Til Sonday, that the sonne goth to rest.
This sely carpenter hath gret mervaile
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him aile,
And said; I am adrad[2] by Seint Thomas
It stondeth not aright with Nicholas:
God shilde that he died sodenly.
This world is now ful tikel[3] sikerly.
I saw to-day a corps yborne to cherche,
That now on Monday last I saw him werche.
Go up (quod he unto his knave) anon;
Clepe[4] at his dore, or knocke with a ston:
Loke how it is, and tell me boldely.
This knave goth him up ful sturdely,
And at the chambre dore while that he stood,
He cried and knocked as that he were wood:
What how? what do ye, maister Nicholay?
How may ye slepen all the longe day?
But all for nought, he herde not a word.
An hole he fond ful low upon the bord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,
And at the hole he loked in ful depe,

[1] Silly. [2] Fearful.
[3] Uncertain. [4] Call.

The Squieres Tale. P. 291.

And at the last he had of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
As he had kyked[1] on the newe mone.
Adown he goth, and telleth his maister sone,
In what array he saw this ilke man.
This carpenter to blissen him began,
And said; Now helpe us Seinte Frideswide.[2]
A man wote litel what shal him betide.
This man is fallen with his astronomie
In som woodnesse[3] or in som agonie.
I thought ay wel how that it shulde be.
Men shulde not knowe of Goddes privetee.
Ya blessed be alway a lewed man,
That nought but only his beleve[4] can.
So ferd another clerk with astronomie;
He walked in the feldes for to prie
Upon the sterres, what ther shuld befalle,
Til he was in a marlepit yfalle.[5]
He saw not that. But yet by Seint Thomas
Me reweth sore of hendy Nicholas:
He shal be rated of[6] his studying,
If that I may, by Jesus heven king.
Get me a staf, that I may underspore[7]
While that thou, Robin, hevest of the dore:
He shal out of his studying, as I gesse.
And to the chambre dore he gan him dresse.
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
And by the haspe he haf it of at ones;
Into the flore the dore fell anon.
This Nicholas sat ay as stille as ston,
And ever he gaped upward into the eire.
This carpenter wend he were in despeire,
And hent him by the shulders mightily,
And shoke him hard, and cried spitously;
What, Nicholas? what how man? loke adoun:
Awake, and thinke on Cristes passioun.

[1] Gazed, *i. e.*, as if he were moonstruck.
[2] This is very apposite. For St. Frideswide was the patroness of priory at Oxford, upon the same site as the present cathedral of Christ-church.
[3] Madness.
[4] *I. e.*, that knows nothing but his Creed.
[5] A similar story is told of Thales.
[6] Chided for studying too much.
[7] Raise it up.

I crouche[1] thee from elves, and from wightes.[2]
Therwith the nightspel said he anon rightes,
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threswold of the dore withoute.
Jesu Crist, and Seint Benedight,[3]
Blisse this hous from every wicked wight,
Fro the nightes mare, the wite Pater-noster;
Wher wonest thou Seint Peters suster?
And at the last this hendy Nicholas
Gan for to siken sore, and said; Alas!
Shal all the world be lost eftsones now?
This carpenter answered; What saiest thou?
What? thinke on God, as we do, men that swinke.[4]
This Nicholas answered; Fetch me a drinke;
And after wol I speke in privetee
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I wol tell it non other man certain.
This carpenter goth doun, and cometh again,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart;
And whan that eche of hem had dronken his part,
This Nicholas his dore faste shette,
And doun the carpenter by him he sette,

[1] I make the sign of the cross to guard thee from, *etc.*

[2] *Witches.* In the Teutonic, *Wite-vrouwe;* but whether they were so called from their *Wisdom*, or from their being supposed to be clothed in *white*, is not clear. A *widow* in that language is called a *Wit-vrouwe* from the latter circumstance. In Keysler's Dissertation *de Mulieribus Fatidicis*, he has traced, with a great deal of learning and probability, the popular notions of witches and witchcraft, in the northern parts of Europe, from a very early period. The faculty of floating on the water, so as not to be capable of being drowned, is ascribed by Pliny to a race of male witches in Pontus.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] *The charm*, which follows, ver. 3482—6, is so lamely represented in all the MSS., that I have left it as I found it in the common editions. It might perhaps be a little improved by reading it thus:

Jesu Crist and Seint Benedight
Blisse this hous from every wight,
Fro the nightes mare. Pater-noster.
Wher wonest thou Seint Peter's suster?

In ver. 2, *wicked* may be left out upon the authority of MS. A. and others. It is certainly unnecessary. *Pater-noster* was often repeated in the middle, as well as at the end, of charms. In ver. 4, instead of *wonest*, some copies read *wendest*. I do not understand how the Night-mare came to be allied to St. Peter.

To say the truth, I suspect this charm to be an interpolation.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[4] Labour.

And saide; John, min hoste lefe and dere,
Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me here,
That to no wight thou shalt my conseil wrey:
For it is Cristes conseil that I say,
And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore:
For this vengeance thou shalt have therfore,
That if thou wreye[1] me, thou shalt be wood.
Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood
Quod tho this sely man; I am no labbe,[2]
Ne though I say it, I n'am not lefe to gabbe.
Say what thou wolt, I shal it never telle
To child ne wif, by him that harwed[3] helle.
Now, John, (quod Nicholas) I wol not lie,
I have yfounde in min astrologie,
As I have loked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Shal fall a rain, and that so wild and wood
That half so gret was never Noes flood.
This world (he said) in less than in an houre
Shal al be dreint,[4] so hidous is the shoure:
Thus shal mankinde drenche, and lese hir lif.
This carpenter answerd; Alas my wif!
And shal she drenche? alas min Alisoun!
For sorwe of this he fell almost adoun,
And said, Is ther no remedy in this cas?
Why yes, for God, quod hendy Nichola
If thou wolt werken after lore[5] and rede;
Thou maist not werken after thin owen hede.
For thus saith Salomon, that was ful trewe;
Werke all by conseil, and thou shalt not rewe.
And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,
I undertake, withouten mast or seyl,
Yet shal I saven hire, and thee and me.
Hast thou not herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord had warned him beforne,
That al the world with water shuld be lorne?
Yes, (quod this carpenter) ful yore ago.
Hast thou not herd (quod Nicholas) also
The sorwe of Noe with his felawship,[6]
Or that he might get his wif to ship?

[1] Betray. [2] Blab.
[3] Harrowed, *i. e.*, conquered, subdued. [4] Drenched. [5] Advice.
[6] Some legend is alluded to, for the Bible says nothing on the subject. Tyrwhitt observes: "The dispute between Noah and his wife upon this

Him had be lever, I dare wel undertake,
At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,[1]
That she had had a ship hireself alone.
And therfore wost thou what is best to done?
This axeth hast,[2] and of an hastif thing
Men may not preche and maken tarying.
Anon go get us fast into this in
A kneding trough or elles a kemelyn,[3]
For eche of us; but loke that they ben large,
In which we mowen swimme as in a barge:
And have therin vitaille suffisant
But for a day; fie on the remenant;
The water shall aslake and gon away
Abouten prime upon the nexte day.
But Robin may not wete of this, thy knave,
Ne eke thy mayden Gille I may not save:
Axe not why: for though thou axe me,
I wol not tellen Goddes privetee.
Sufficeth thee, but if thy wittes madde,
To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.
Thy wif shal I wel saven out of doute.
Go now thy way, and spede thee hereaboute.

occasion makes a considerable part of the 3rd Pageant of the *Chester Whitsun-Playes* above mentioned. MS. *Harl.* 2013. The following lines will shew the grounds of her refusal to embark.

NOE. Wife, come in, why standes thou there?
Thou art ever froward, that dare I swere.
Come in on Godes halfe; tyme it were,
For fear lest that wee drowne.

WIFE. Yea, Sir, set up your saile,
And rowe forth with evil haile,
For withouten anie faile
I wil not oute of this toune;
But I have my gossepes everich one,
One foote further I will not gone:
They shal not drown by St. John,
And I may save ther life.
They loved me full well by Christ.
But thou will let them into thie chist,
Ellis rowe forthe, Noe, when thou list,
And get thee a newe wife.

At last Sem, with the assistance of his brethren, fetches her on board by force, and upon Noah's welcoming her she gives him a box on the ear."

[1] Black. [2] Requireth haste. [3] Tub.

But whan thou hast for hire, and thee, and me
Ygeten us these kneding tubbes thre,
Than shalt thou hang hem in the roofe ful hie,
That no man of our purveyance espie:
And whan thou hast don thus as I have said,
And hast our vitaille faire in hem ylaid,
And eke an axe to smite the cord a-two
Whan that the water cometh, that we may go,
And breke an hole on high upon the gable
Unto the gardin ward, over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth our way,
Whan that the grete shoure is gon away.
Than shal thou swim as mery, I undertake,
As doth the white doke after hire drake:
Than wol I clepe, How Alison, how John,
Be mery: for the flood wol passe anon.
And thou wolt sain, Haile maister Nicholay,
Good morwe, I see thee wel, for it is day.
And than shall we be lordes all our lif
Of all the world, as Noe and his wif.
But of o thing I warne thee ful right,
Be wel avised on that ilke night,
That we ben entred into shippes bord,
That non of us ne speke not o word,
Ne clepe ne crie, but be in his praiere,
For it is Goddes owen heste dere.
Thy wif and thou moste hangen fer a-twinne,
For that betwixen you shal be no sinne,
No more in loking than ther shal in dede.
This ordinance is said: go, God thee spede.
To-morwe at night, whan men ben all aslepe,
Into our kneding tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitten ther, abiding Goddes grace.
Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermoning:
Men sain thus: send the wise, and say nothing:
Thou art so wise, it nedeth thee nought teche.
Go, save our lives, and that I thee besecche.
This sely carpenter goth forth his way,
Ful oft he said alas, and wala wa,
And to his wif he told his privetee,
And she was ware, and knew it bet than he
What all this queinte cast was for to sey.
But natheles she ferde as she would dey,

And said; Alas! go forth thy way anon.
Helpe us to scape, or we be ded eche on.
I am thy trewe veray wedded wif;
Go, dere spouse, and helpe to save our lif.
Lo, what a gret thing is affection,
Men may die of imagination,
So depe may impression be take.
This sely carpenter beginneth quake:
Him thinketh verailly that he may see
Noes flood comen walwing[1] as the see
To drenchen Alison, his hony dere.
He wepeth, waileth, maketh sory chere;
He siketh, with ful many a sory swough.[2]
He goth, and geteth him a kneding trough,
And after a tubbe, and a kemelin,
And prively he sent hem to his in:
And heng hem in the roof in privetee.
His owen hond[3] than made he ladders three,
To climben by the renges and the stalkes[4]
Unto the tubbes honging in the balkes;[5]
And vitailled bothe kemelin, trough and tubbe,
With bred and chese, and good ale in a jubbe,
Sufficing right ynow as for a day.
But er that he had made all this array,
He sent his knave, and eke his wenche also
Upon his nede to London for to go.
And on the Monday, whan it drew to night,
He shette his dore, withouten candel light,
And dressed all thing as it shulde bee.
And shortly up they clomben alle three.
They sitten stille wel a furlong way.
Now, *Pater noster*, clum,[6] said Nicholay:
And clum, quod John, and clum, said Alison:
This carpenter said his devotion,
And still he sit, and biddeth his praiere,
Awaiting on the rain, if he it here.
The dede slepe, for wery besinesse,
Fell on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
Abouten curfew-time, or litel more.
For travaille of his gost[7] he groneth sore,

[1] Rolling. [2] Sound. [3] *By* his own hand.
[4] *I. e.* The steps and upright posts of a ladder. [5] The rafters.
[6] Mum. From the Latin *mussitare*, to mumble, to mutter.
[7] Spirit.

And eft he routeth, for his hed mislay.
Doun of the ladder stalketh Nicholay,
And Alison ful soft adoun hire spedde
Withouten wordes mo they went to bedde,
Ther as the carpenter was wont to lie;
Ther was the revel, and the melodie.
And thus lith Alison, and Nicholas,
In besinesse of mirthe and in solas,
Til that the bel of *laudes* gan to ring,
And freres[1] in the chancel gon to sing.
This parish clerk, this amorous Absolon,
That is for love alway so wo-begon,
Upon the Monday was at Osenay
With compagnie, him to disport and play;
And asked upon cas a cloisterer
Ful prively after John the carpenter;
And he drew him apart out of the chirche.
He said, I n'ot; I saw him not here wirche
Sith Saturday; I trow that he be went
For timbre, ther our abbot hath him sent.
For he is wont for timbre for to go,
And dwellen at the Grange a day or two:
Or elles he is at his hous certain.
Wher that he be, I cannot sothly sain.
This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoughte, now is time to wake al night,
For sikerly, I saw him nat stiring
About his dore, sin day began to spring.
So mote I thrive, I shal at cockes crow
Ful prively go knocke at his window,
That stant ful low upon his boures wall:
To Alison wol I now tellen all
My love-longing; for yet I shall not misse,
That at the leste way I shall hire kisse.
Some maner comfort shal I have parfay,
My mouth hath itched all this longe day:
That is a signe of kissing at the leste.
All night me mette eke, I was at a feste.
Therfore I will go slepe an houre or twey,
And all the night than wol I wake and pley.
Whan that the firste cock hath crowe, anon
Up rist this joly lover Absolon,

[1] Brethren.

And him arayeth gay, at point devise.
But first he cheweth grein and licorise,
To smellen sote, or he had spoke with here.
Under his tonge a trewe love[1] he bere,
For therby wend he to ben gracious.
He cometh to the carpenteres hous,
And still he stant under the shot window;
Unto his brest it raught,[2] it was so low;
And soft he cougheth with a semisoun.
What do ye honycombe, swete Alisoun?
My faire bird, my swete sinamome,
Awaketh, lemman min, and speketh to me.
Ful litel thinken ye upon my wo,
That for your love I swete ther as I go.
No wonder is though that I swelte and swete.
I mourne as doth a lamb after the tete.
Ywis, lemman, I have swiche love-longing,
That like a turtel trewe is my mourning.
I may not ete no more than a maid.
Go fro the window, jacke fool, she said:
As helpe me God, it wol not be, compame.[3]
I love another, or elles I were to blame,
Wel bet than thee by Jesu, Absolon.
Go forth thy way, or I wol cast a ston;
And let me slepe; a twenty divel way.
Alas! (quod Absolon) and wala wa!
That trewe love was ever so yvel besette:
Than kisse me, sin that it may be no bette,
For Jesus love, and for the love of me.
Wilt thou than go thy way therwith? quod she.
Ya certes, lemman, quod this Absolon.
Than make thee redy (quod she) I come anon.
This Absolon doun set him on his knees,
And saide; I am a lord at all degrees:
For after this I hope ther cometh more;
Lemman, thy grace, and, swete bird, thyn ore.[4]
The window she undoth, and that in haste.
Have don, (quod she) come of, and spede thee faste,
Lest that our neigheboures thee espie.
This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drie.
Derke was the night, as pitch or as the cole,
And at the window she put out hire hole,

[1] What this can be, I know not. [2] Reached.
[3] Companion, friend. [4] Grace.

And Absolon him felle ne bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kist hire naked ers
Ful savorly, er he was ware of this.
Abak he sterte, and thoughte it was amis,
For wel he wist a woman hath no berd.
He felt a thing all rowe, and long yherd,
And saide; fy, alas! what have I do?
Te he, quod she, and clapt the window to;
And Absolon goth forth a sory pas.
A berd, a berd, said hendy Nicholas;
By goddes *corpus*, this goth faire and wel.
This sely Absolon herd every del,
And on his lippe he gan for anger bite;
And to himself he said, I shal thee quite.
Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with cloth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that saith full oft, alas!
My soule betake I unto Sathanas,
But me were lever than all this toun (quod he)
Of this despit awroken for to be.
Alas! alas! that I ne had yblent.
His hote love is cold, and all yqueint.
For fro that time that he had kist hire ers,
Of paramours ne raught he not a kers,
For he was heled of his maladie;
Ful often paramours he gan defie,
And wepe as doth a child that is ybete.
A softe pas he went him over the strete
Until a smith, men callen dan Gerveis,
That in his forge smithed plow-harneis;
He sharpeth share and cultre besily.
This Absolon knocketh all esily,
And said; Undo, Gerveis, and that anon.
What, who art thou? It am I Absolon.
What, Absolon, what? Cristes swete tre,[1]
Why rise ye so rath?[2] ey *benedicite*,
What eileth you? some gay girle, God it wote,
Hath brought you thus upon the viretote:[3]
By Seint Neote, ye wote wel what I mene.
This Absolon ne raughte not a bene
Of all his play; no word again he yaf.
He hadde more tawo on his distaf[4]

[1] *I. e.*, the cross. [2] Early.
[3] The meaning of this word is unknown.
[4] *I. e.* he was planning more.

Than Gerveis knew, and saide; Frend so dare,
That hote culter in the cheminee here
As lene[1] it me, I have therwith to don;
I wol it bring again to thee ful sone.
Gerveis answered; Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke[2] nobles all untold,
Thou shuldest it have, as I am trewe smith.
Ey, Cristes foot, what wol ye don therwith?
Therof, quod Absolon, be as be may;
I shal wel tellen thee another day:
And caught the culter by the colde stele.
Ful soft out at the dore he gan to stele,
And went unto the carpenteres wall.
He coughed first, and knocked therwithall
Upon the window, right as he did er.
This Alison answered; Who is ther
That knocketh so? I warrant him a thefe.
Nay, nay, (quod he) God wot, my swete lefe,
I am thin Absolon, thy dereling.
Of gold (quod he) I have thee brought a ring,
My mother yave it me, so God me save,
Ful fine it is, and therto wel ygrave:
This wol I yeven thee, if thou me kisse.
This Nicholas was risen for to pisse,
And thought he wolde amenden all the jape,
He shulde kisse his ers er that he scape:
And up the window did he hastily,
And out his ers he putteth prively
Over the buttok, to the hanche bon.
And therwith spake this clerk, this Absolon,
Speke swere bird, I n'ot not wher thou art.
This Nicholas anon let fleen a fart,
As gret as it had ben a thonder dint,
That with the stroke he was wel nie yblint:
And he was redy with his yren hote,
And Nicholas amid the ers he smote.
Off goth the skinne an hondbrede al aboute.
The hote culter brenned so his toute,
That for the smert he wened for to die;
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crie,
Help, water, water, help for Goddes herte.
This carpenter out of his slomber sterte,

[1] Wilt lend. [2] Pouch.

And herd on crie water, as he were wood,
And thought, alas, now cometh Noes flood
He set him up withouten wordes mo,
And with his axe he smote the cord atwo;
And doun goth all; he fond neyther to selle
Ne breed ne ale, til he came to the selle,[1]
Upon the flore, and ther aswoune he lay.
Up sterten Alison and Nicholay,
And crieden, out and harow! in the strete.
The neigheboures bothe smale and grete
In rannen, for to gauren[2] on this man,
That yet aswoune lay, bothe pale and wan:
For with the fall he brosten hath his arm.
But stonden he must unto his owen harm,
For whan he spake, he was anon bore doun
With hendy Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood![3]
He was agaste so of Noes flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanitee
He had ybought him kneding tubbes three,
And had hem honged in the roof above;
And that he praied hem for Goddes love
To sitten in the roof *par compagnie.*
The folk gan laughen at his fantasie.
Into the roof they kyken,[4] and they gape,
And turned all his harm into a jape.
For what so that this carpenter answerd,
It was for nought, no man his reson herd.
With othes gret he was so sworne adoun,
That he was holden wood in all the toun.
For everich clerk anon right held with other;
They said, the man was wood, my leve brother;
And every wight gan laughen at this strif.
Thus swived was the carpenteres wif,
For all his keping, and his jalousie;
And Absolon hath kist hire nether eye;
And Nicholas is scalded in the toute.
This tale is don, and God save all the route.

[1] The ground. [2] Stare.
[3] Mad. [4] Gaze.

THE REVES PROLOGUE.

3853–3882.

Whan folk han laughed at this nice cas
Of Absolon and hendy Nicholas,
Diverse folk diversely they saide,
But for the more part they lought and plaide;
Ne at this tale I saw no man him greve,
But it were only Osewold the Reve,
Because he was of carpenteres craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grutch and blamen it a lite.
So the ik,[1] quod he, ful wel coude I him quite
With blering[2] of a proude milleres eye,
If that me list to speke of ribaudrie.
But ik[3] am olde; me list not play for age;
Gras time is don, my foddre is now forage.
This white top writeth min olde yeres;
Min herte is also mouled as min heres;
But if I fare as doth an open-ers;[4]
That ilke fruit is ever lenger the wers
Til it be roten[5] in mullok[6] or in stre.
We olde men, I drede, so faren we,
Til we be roten, can we not be ripe;
We hoppe alway, while that the world wol pipe;
For in our will ther stiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hore hed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leke; for though our might be gon,
Our will desireth folly ever in on:
For whan we may not don, than wol we speken,
Yet in our ashen cold is fire yreken.
Foure gledes han we, which I shal devise,
Avaunting, lying anger and covetise.

[1] So may I fare.
[2] *I. e.*, with a story of a miller being imposed upon
[3] I.
[4] The medlar
[5] Rotten.
[6] Dung.

These foure ¬parkes longen unto elde.
Our olde limes[1] mow wel ben unwelde,[2]
But will ne shal not taillen, that is sothe.
And yet have I alway a coltes tothe
As many a yere as it is passed henne,
Sin that my tappe of lif began to renne.
For sikerly, whan I was borne, anon
Deth drow the tappe of lif, and let it gon:
And ever sith hath so the tappe yronne,
Til that almost all empty is the tonne.
The streme of lif now droppeth on the chimbe.[3]
The sely tonge may wel ringe and chimbe
Of wretchednesse, that passed is ful yore:
With olde folk, save dotage, is no more.
Whan that our Hoste had herd this sermoning,
He gan to speke as lordly as a king,
And sayde; What amounteth all this wit?
What? shal we speke all day of holy writ?
The divel made a Reve for to preche,
Or of a souter[4] a shipman, or a leche.
Say forth thy tale, and tary not the time:
Lo Depeford, and it is halt way prime:[5]
Lo Grenewich, ther many a shrew is inne.
It were al time thy tale to beginne.
Now, sires, quod this Osewold the Reve,
I pray you alle, that ye not you greve,
Though I answere, and somdel set his howve,[6]
For leful is with force force off to showve.
This dronken Miller hath ytold us here,
How that begiled was a carpentere,
Paraventure in scorne, for I am on:
And by your leve, I shal him quite anon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke.
I pray to God his necke mote to-breke.
He can wel in min eye seen a stalk,
But in his owen he cannot seen a balk.

[1] Limbs. [2] Unwieldy.
[3] *Kime*, Teut. means the prominency of the taves beyond the head of the barrel. The imagery is very exact and beautiful.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[4] *Sutor*, a cobbler.
[5] *I. e.*, half-past seven, A. M. See *Tyrwhitt.* [6] Hood, or cap.

The Reves Tale.

3919–3940.

At Trompington, not fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,[1]
Upon the whiche brook ther stont a melle:
And this is veray sothe, that I you telle.
A miller was ther dwelling many a day,
As any peacok he was proud and gay:
Pipen he coude, and fishe, and nettes bete.[2]
And turnen cuppes, and wrastlen wel, and shete.[3]
Ay by his belt he bare a long pavade,[4]
And of a swerd ful trenchant[5] was the blade.
A joly popper[6] bare he in his pouche;
Ther n'as no man for peril dorst him touche.
A Shefeld thwitel[7] bare he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camuse[8] was his nose.
As pilled[9] as an ape was his skull.
He was a market-beter[10] at the full.
There dorste no wight hond upon him legge,
That he ne swore he shuld anon abegge.[11]
A thefe he was forsoth, of corn and mele,
And that a slie, and usant[12] for to stele.
His name was hoten deinous Simekin.[13]
A wif he hadde, comen of noble kin:

[1] Bridge. [2] Mend. [3] Shoot.
[4] Some weapon of offence. [5] Cutting.
[6] Probably a pistol. Some say a bodkin. [7] Whittle.
[8] Flat. [9] Bald.
[10] Either a "raiser of market-prices" (*Upton*), or one who swaggers about the market.—See *Tyrwhitt, gl.* [11] Suffer for it.
[12] Used, accustomed.
[13] His name was *Simon*, ver. 4020, 4, of which *Simekin* is the diminutive; and from his *disdainful, insolent* manners he had acquired the surname of *Deinous*, just as Nicholas, in the former tale, ver. 3199, "was cleped *Hendy*," from the very opposite behaviour. A great number of our surnames have been derived from qualities of the mind, and it is reasonable to suppose that at the beginning they were merely *personal*,

The person of the toun hire father was.
With hire he yaf ful many a pan of bras,
For that Simkin shuld in his blood allie.
She was yfostered in a nonnerie:
For Simkin wolde no wif, as he sayde,
But she were wel ynourished, and a mayde,
To saven his estat of yemanrie:
And she was proud, and pert as is a pie.
A ful faire sight was it upon hem two.
On holy dayes beforne hire wold he go
With his tipet ybounde about his hed;
And she came after in a gite[1] of red,
And Simkin hadde hosen of the same.
Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but dame:
Was non so hardy, that went by the way,
That with hire dorste rage or ones play,
But if he wold be slain of Simekin
With pavade, or with knif, or bodekin.
(For jalous folk ben perilous evermo:
Algate[2] they wold hir wives wenden so.)
And eke for she was somdel smoterlich,[3]
She was as digne as water in a dich,
And al so ful of hoker, and of bismare.
Hire thoughte that a ladie shuld hire spare,
What for hire kinrede, and hire nortelrie,[4]
That she had lerned in the nonnerie.
A doughter hadden they betwix hem two
Of twenty yere, withouten any mo,
Saving a child that was of half yere age,
In cradle it lay, and was a propre page.[5]
This wenche thicke and wel ygrowen was,
With camuse nose, and eyen grey as glas;
With buttokes brode, and brestes round and hie;
But right faire was hire here,[6] I wol nat lie.
The person of the toun, for she was faire,
In purpos was to maken hire his haire
Both of his catel, and of his mesuage,
And strange he made it of hire mariage.

like what we call *nicknames*. It is probable that the use of *hereditary* surnames was not, even in Chaucer's time, fully established among the lower classes of people.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Gown. [2] Always. [3] Dirty.
[4] Nurture, education. [5] Boy. [6] Hair.

His purpos was for to bestowe hire hie
Into som worthy blood of ancestrie.
For holy chirches good mote ben despended
On holy chirches blood that is descended.
Therfore he wolde his holy-blood honoure,
Though that he holy chirche shuld devoure.
Gret soken[1] hath this miller out of doute
With whete and malt, of all the land aboute;
And namely ther was a gret college
Men clepe the Soler hall[2] at Cantebrege,
Ther was hir whete and eke hir malt yground.
And on a day it happed in a stound,[3]
Sike lay the manciple on a maladie,
Men wenden wisly[4] that he shulde die.
For which this miller stale both mele and corn
An hundred times more than beforn.
For therbeforn he stale but curteisly,
But now he was a thefe outrageously.
For which the wardein chidde and made fare,[5]
But therof set the miller not a tare;
He craked bost,[6] and swore it n'as not so.
Than were ther yonge poure scoleres two,
That dwelten in the halle of which I say;
Testif they were, and lusty for to play;
And only for hir mirth and revelrie
Upon the wardein besily they crie,
To yeve hem leve but a litel stound,
To gon to mille, and seen hir corn yground:
And hardily they dorsten lay hir necke,
The miller shuld not stele hem half a pecke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force him reve.
And at the last the wardein yave hem leve:
John highte that on, and Alein highte that other,
Of o toun were they born, that highte Strother,[7]

[1] Toll.

[2] It means *the Hall with the Soler*. Before the students in our Universities were incorporated, they lived in lodging-houses, called Inns, Halls, and Hostels, which were often distinguished by names taken from some peculiarity in their construction. One at Cambridge was called *Tyled Ostle*. And at Oxford Oriel-College probably derives its name from a large Messuage, vulgarly known by the name of *Le Oriele*, upon the site of which it stands. An *Oriel*, or *Oriol*, was a Porch; as a *Soler* seems originally to have signified an open *gallery*, or *balcony*, at the top of the house.—*Tyrwhitt*.

[3] In a moment, on a sudden.

[4] Thought for certain.

[5] Ado.

[6] Spoke aloud.

[7] There is a Struther, or Strouther, in the Shire of Fife.

Fer in the North, I can not tellen where.
This Alein maketh redy all his gere,
And on a hors the sak he cast anon:
Forth goth Alein the clerk, and also John,
With good swerd and with bokeler by hir side.
John knew the way, him neded not no guide,
And at the mille the sak adoun he laith.
Alein spake first; All haile, Simond, in faith,
How fares[1] thy faire doughter, and thy wif?
Alein, welcome (quod Simkin) by my lif,
And John also: how now, what do ye here?
By God, Simond, (quod John) nede has no pere.[2]
Him behoves serve himself that has na swain,
Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sain.
Our manciple I hope[3] he wol be ded,
Swa[4] werkes ay the wanges[5] in his hed:
And therfore is I com, and eke Alein,
To grind our corn and cary it hame agein:
I pray you spede us henen[6] that ye may.
It shal be don (quod Simkin) by my fay.
What wol ye don while that it is in hand?
By God, right by the hopper wol I stand,
(Quod John) and seen how that the corn gas in.
Yet saw I never by my fader kin,
How that the hopper wagges til and fra.
Alein answered; John, and wolt thou swa?
Than wol I be benethe by my croun,
And see how that the mele falles adoun
In til the trogh, that shal be my disport:
For, John, in faith I may ben of your sort;
I is as ill a miller as is ye.
This miller smiled at hir nicetee,
And thought, all this n'is don but for a wile.
They wenen that no man may hem begile,
But by my thrift yet shal I blere hir eie,
For all the sleighte in hir philosophie.
The more queinte knakkes that they make,
The more wol I stele whan that I take.
In stede of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.
The gretest clerkes ben not the wisest men,

[1] Chaucer, it may be observed, has given his clerks a northern dialect. —See *Tyrwhitt*.
[2] Match.
[3] Expect.
[4] So.
[5] Cheek-teeth.
[6] Hence.

As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare:[1]
Of all hir art ne count I not a tare.
Out at the dore he goth ful prively,
Whan that he saw his time, softely.
He loketh up and doun, till he hath found
The clerkes hors, ther as he stood ybound
Behind the mille, under a levesell;[2]
And to the hors he goth him faire and well,
And stripeth of the bridel right anon.
And whan the hors was laus, he gan to gon
Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,
And forth, with wehee,[3] thurgh thick and thinne.
This miller goth again, no word he said,
But doth his note,[4] and with these clerkes plaid,
Till that hir corn was faire and wel yground.
And whan the mele is sacked and ybound,
This John goth out, and fint his hors away,
And gan to crie, harow and wala wa!
Our hors is lost: Alein, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet; come of, man, al at anes:
Alas! our wardein has his palfrey lorn.
This Alein al forgat both mele and corn;
Al was out of his mind his husbandrie!
What, whilke way is he gon? he gan to crie.
The wif came leping inward at a renne,
She sayd; Alas! youre horse goth to the fenne
With wilde mares, as fast as he may go,
Unthank come on his hand that bond him so,
And he that better shuld have knit the rein.
Alas! (quod John) Alein, for Christes pein
Lay doun thy swerd, and I shal min alswa,
I is ful wight, God wate, as is a ra.[5]
By Goddes saule he shall not scape us bathe.
Why ne had thou put the capel[6] in the lathe?[7]

[1] The story alluded to is told of a mule in *Cent. Nov. Ant.* N. 91. The Mule pretends that his name is written upon the bottom of his hind-foot. The Wolf attempting to read it, the Mule gives him a kick on the forehead and kills him. Upon which the Fox, who was present, observes, *Ogni huomo, che sa lettera, non è savio.* There is a similar story of a Wolf and *a Mare* in *the most delectable History of Reynard the Fox.* Edit. 1701. ch. xviii.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] A leafy seat, or arbour.

[3] A word to express the neighing of a horse.

[4] Business.

Roe deer.

[6] Horse.

[7] Barn.

The Reves Tale. P. 114.

Ill haile, Alein, by God thou is a fonne.[1]
These sely clerkes han ful fast yronne
Toward the fen, both Alein and eke John:
And whan the miller saw that they were gon,
He half a bushel of hir flour hath take,
And bad his wif go knede it in a cake.
He sayd; I trow, the clerkes were aferde.
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berde,[2]
For all his art. Ye, let hem gon hir way.
Lo wher they gon. Ye, let the children play:
They get him not so lightly by my croun.
These sely clerkes rennen up and doun
With kepe, kepe; stand, stand; jossa, warderere.[3]
Ga whistle thou, and I shall kepe him here.
But shortly, til that it was veray night
They coude not, though they did all hir might,
Hir capel catch, he ran alway so fast:
Til in a diche they caught him at the last.
Wery and wet, as bestes in the rain,
Cometh sely John, and with him cometh Alein.
Alas (quod John) the day that I was borne!
Now are we driven till hething[4] and til scorne.
Our corn is stolne, men wol us fonnes calle,
Both the wardein, and eke our felawes alle,
And namely the miller, wala wa!
Thus plaineth[5] John, as he goth by the way
Toward the mille, and bayard[6] in his hond.
The miller sitting by the fire he fond,
For it was night, and forther might they nought,
But for the love of God they him besought
Of herberwe[7] and of ese,[8] as for hir peny.
The miller said agen, if ther be any,
Swiche as it is, yet shull ye have your part.
Myn hous is streit, but ye have lerned art;
Ye can by arguments maken a place
A mile brode, of twenty foot of space.
Let see now if this place may suffice.
Or make it roume[9] with speche, as is your gise.
Now, Simond, (said this John) by Seint Cuthberd
Ay is thou mery, and that is faire answerd.

[1] Fool. [2] *I. e.*, make a fool of him.
[3] Perhaps a corruption of the French, "*Garde arrière.*"—*Tyrwhitt.*
[4] Contempt. [5] Lamenteth. [6] Horse.
[7] Lodging. [8] Rest. [9] Spacious.

I have herd say, man sal take of twa thinges,
Slike as he findes, or slike as he bringes.
But specially I pray thee, hoste dere,
Gar us have mete and drinke, and make us chere,
And we sal paien trewely at the full:
With empty hand men may na haukes tull.[2]
Le here our silver redy for to spend.
This miller to the toun his doughter send
For ale and bred, and rosted hem a goos,
And bond hir bothe, he shuld no more go loos:
And in his owen chambre hem made a bedde,
With sheetes and with chalons[3] faire yspredde,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve:
His doughter had a bed all by hireselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by:
It might be no bet, and cause why,
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.
They soupen, and they speken of solace,
And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
Aboute mid-night wente they to rest.
Wel hath this miller vernished his hed,
Ful pale he was, for-dronken, and nought red.
He yoxeth,[4] and he speketh thurgh the nose,
As he were on the quakke, or on the pose.[5]
To bed he goth, and with him goth his wif;
As any jay she light was and jolif,
So was hire joly whistle wel ywette.
The cradel at hire beddes teet was sette,
To rocken, and to yeve the child to souke.
And whan that dronken was all in the crouke[6]
To bedde went the doughter right anon,
To bedde goth Alein, and also John.
Ther n'as no more; nedeth hem no dwale.[7]
This miller hath so wisly[8] bibbed ale,
That as an hors he snorteth in his slepe,
Ne of his tail behind he toke no kepe.
His wif bare him a burdon a ful strong;
Men might hir routing heren a furlong.
The wenche routeth eke *par compagnie*.
Alein the clerk that herd this melodie,

[1] Let. [2] Lure. [3] Some coverlet made at *Chalons*.
[4] Hiccupped. [5] As if he had an obstruction or catarrh.
[6] Pitcher. [7] Sleeping-draught. [8] Thoroughly.

He poketh John, and sayde: Slepest thou?
Herdest thou ever slike a song er now?
Lo whilke a complin[1] is ymell[2] hem alle.
A wilde fire upon hir bodies falle,
Wha herkned ever slike a ferly[3] thing?
Ye, they shall have the flour of yvel ending.
This lange night ther tides me no reste.
But yet na force, all shal be for the beste.
For, John, (sayd he) as ever mote I thrive,
If that I may, yon wenche wol I swive.
Som esement has lawe yshapen us.
For, John, ther is a lawe that saieth thus,
That if a man in o point be agreved,
That in another he shal be releved.
Our corn is stolne, sothly it is na nay,
And we han had an yvel fit to-day.
And sin I shal have nan amendement
Again my losse, I wol have an esement:
By Goddes saule, it shal nan other be.
This John answered; Alein, avise thee:
The miller is a perilous man, he sayde.
And if that he out of his slepe abraide,
He mighte don us bathe a vilanie.
Alein answered; I count him nat a flie
And up he rist, and by the wenche he crept.
This wenche lay upright, and faste slept,
Til he so nigh was, er she might espie,
That it had ben to late for to crie:
And shortly for to say, they were at on.
Now play, Alein, for I wol speke of John.
This John lith still a furlong way or two,
And to himself he maketh routh and wo.
Alas! (quod he) this is a wicked jape;
Now may I say, that I is but an ape.
Yet has my felaw somwhat for his harme;
He has the millers doughter in his arme:
He auntered[4] him, and hath his nedes spedde,
And I lie as a draf-sak[5] in my bedde;
And whan this jape is tald another day,
I shal be halden a daffe[6] or a cokenay:[7]

[1] Singing. [2] Among. [3] Strange
[4] Adventured. [5] A bag of rubbish. [6] Fool.
[7] That this is a term of contempt, borrowed originally from the kitchen, is very probable. A cook, in the base Latinity, was called

I wol arise, and auntre it by my fay:
Unhardy is unsely,[1] thus men say.
And up he rose, and softely he went
Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hent,
And bare it soft unto his beddes fete.
Sone after this the wif hire routing lete,
And gan awake, and went hire out to pisse,
And came again, and gan the cradel misse,
And groped here and ther, but she fond non.
Alas! (quod she) I had almost misgon.
I had almost gon to the clerkes bedde.
Ey *benedicite*, than had I foule yspedde.
And forth she goth, til she the cradel fond.
She gropeth alway forther with hire hond.
And fond the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
Because that the cradel by it stood,
And n'iste wher she was, for it was derk,
But faire and wel she crept in by the clerk,
And lith ful still, and wold han caught a slepe.
Within a while this John the clerk up lepe,
And on this goode wif he laieth on sore;
So mery a fit ne had she nat ful yore.
He priketh hard and depe, as he were mad.
This joly lif han these two clerkes lad,
Til that the thridde cok began to sing.
Alein wex werie in the morwening,
For he had swonken all the longe night,
And sayd; Farewel, Malkin, my swete wight.
The day is come, I may no longer bide,
But evermo, wher so I go or ride,

Coquinator, and *Coquinarius*, from either of which *Cokeney* might easily be derived. In pp. fol. xxxv. 6.

And yet I say by my soule I have no salt bacon
Ne no *Cokeney* by Christe coloppes to make.

It seems to signify a *Cook*.—In those rhymes ascribed to Hugh Bigot, which Camden has published, Brit. Col. 451 (upon what authority I know not.)

"Were I in my castle of Bungey
Upon the river of Waveney,
I would ne care for the King of *Cockeney*."

The author, in calling London *Cockeney*, might possibly allude to that imaginary country of Idleness and Luxury, which was anciently known by the name of "*Cokaigne*," or *Cocagne*, a name which Hickes has shewn to be derived from *Coquina*.—*Tyrwhitt*.

[1] Unhappy.

I is thin awen clerk, so have I hele.[1]
Now, dere lemman, quod she, go farewele:
But or thou go, o thing I wol thee tell.
Whan that thou wendest homeward by the hell,
Right at the entree of the dore behind
Thou shalt a cake of half a bushel find,
That was ymaked of thin owen mele,
Which that I halpe my fader for to stele.
And goode lemman, God thee save and kepe.
And with that word she gan almost to wepe.
Alein uprist and thought, er that it daw
I wol go crepen in by my felaw:
And fond the cradel at his hand anon.
By God, thought he, all wrang I have misgon:
My hed is tottie of my swink to night,
That maketh me that I go nat aright.
I wot wel by the cradel I have misgo;
Here lith the miller and his wif also.
And forth he goth a twenty divel way
Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
He wend have cropen[2] by his felaw John,
And by the miller in he crept anon,
And caught him by the nekke, and gan him shake,
And sayd; Thou John, thou swineshed awake
For Cristes saule, and here a noble game:
For by that lord that called is Seint Jame,
As[3] I have thries as in this short night
Swived the millers doughter bolt-upright,
While thou hast as a coward ben agast.
Ye, false harlot, quod the miller, hast?
A, false traitour, false clerk, (quod he)
Thou shalt be ded by Goddes dignitee,
Who dorste be so bold to disparage
My doughter, that is come of swiche linage.
And by the throte-bolle he caught Alein,
And he him hent despitously again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fist;
Doun ran the blody streme upon his brest:
And in the flore with nose and mouth to-broke
They walwe,[4] as don two pigges in a poke.
And up they gon, and doun again anon,
Til that the miller sporned at a ston,
And doun he fell backward upon his wif,
That wiste nothing of this nice strif:

[1] Salvation. [2] Would have crept. [3] So. [4] Wallowed.

For she was fall aslepe a litel wight
With John the clerk, that waked had all night:
And with the fall out of hire slepe she braide.
Helpe, holy crois of Bromeholme, (she sayde)
In manus tuas, Lord, to thee I call.
Awake, Simond, the fend is on me fall;
Myn herte is broken; helpe; I n'am but ded;
Ther lith on up my wombe and up myn hed.
Helpe, Simkin, for the false clerkes fight.
This John stert up as fast as ever he might,
And graspeth by the walles to and fro
To find a staf, and she stert up also,
And knew the estres[1] bet than did this John,
And by the wall she toke a staf anon:
And saw a litel shemering of a light,
For at an hole in shone the mone bright,
And by that light she saw hem bothe two,
But sikerly she n'iste who was who,
But as she saw a white thing in hire eye.
And whan she gan this white thing espie,
She wend the clerk had wered a volupere;[2]
And with the staf she drow ay nere and nere,
And wend han hit this Alein atte full,
And smote the miller on the pilled skull,
That doun he goth, and cried, harow! I die
Thise clerkes bete him wel, and let him lie,
And greithen[3] hem, and take hir hors anon,
And eke hir mele, and on hir way they gon:
And at the mille dore eke they toke hir cake
Of half a bushel flour, ful wel ybake.
Thus is the proude miller wel ybete,
And hath ylost the grinding of the whete,
And paied for the souper every del
Of Alein and of John, that bete him wel;
His wif is swived, and his daughter als;
Lo, swiche it is a miller to be fals.
And therfore this proverbe is sayd ful soth,
Him thar[4] not winnen wel that evil doth;
A gilour[5] shal himself begiled be:
And God that siteth hie in magestee
Save all thus compagnie, gret and smale.
Thus have I quit the miller in my tale.

[1] The inner premises. [2] Night-cap. [3] Prepared.
[4] He shall not; it behoveth not that he win. [5] A deceiver.

THE COKES PROLOGUE.

4323–4354.

THE Coke of London, while the Reve spake,
For joye (him thought) he clawed him on the bak.
A ha (quod he) for Cristes passion,
This miller had a sharp conclusion,
Upon this argument of herbergage.
Wel sayde Salomon in his langage,
Ne bring not every man into thin hous,
For herberwing[1] by night is perilous.
Wel ought a man avised for to be
Whom that he brought into his privetee.
I pray to God so yeve me sorwe and care,
If ever, sithen I highte Hodge of Ware,
Herd I a miller bet[2] ysette a-werk;
He had a jape of malice in the derk.
But God forbede that we stinten here,
And therfore if ye vouchen sauf[3] to here
A tale of me that am a poure man,
I wol you tell as wel as ever I can
A litel jape that fell in our citee.
Our hoste answerd and sayde; I grant it thee:
Now tell on, Roger, and loke that it be good,
For many a pastee hast thou letten blood,
And many a Jacke of Dover hast thou sold,
That hath been twies hot and twies cold.
Of many a pilgrim hast thou Cristes curse,
For of thy perselee[4] yet fare they the werse,
That they han eten in thy stoble goos:[5]
For in thy shop goth many a flie loos.
Now tell on, gentil Roger by thy name,
But yet I pray thee be not wroth for game;
A man may say ful soth, in game and play,
Thou sayst full soth, quod Roger, by my fay;

[1] Housing. [2] Better. [3] If ye are willing. [4] Parsley.
[5] A goose feed in a stubble-field, *i. e.*, a lean, meagre goose.

But soth play *quade spel*,[1] as the Fleming saith,
And therfore, Herry Bailly, by thy faith,
Be thou not wroth, or we departen here,
Though that my tale be of an hostelere.
But natheles, I wol not telle it yet,
But er we part, ywis thou shalt be quit.
And therewithal he lough and made chere,
And sayd his tale, as ye shul after here.

The Cokes Tale.

A PRENTIS whilom dwelt in our citee,
And of a craft of vitaillers was he:
Gaillard[2] he was, as goldfinch in the shawe,[3]
Broune as a bery, a propre short felawe:
With lokkes blake, kembed ful fetisly.
Dancen he coude so wel and jolily,
That he was cleped Perkin Revelour.
He was as ful of love and paramour,
As is the hive ful of hony swete;
Wel was the wenche with him mighte mete.
At every bridale would he sing and hoppe;
He loved bet the taverne than the shoppe.
For whan ther any riding[4] was in Chepe,
Out of the shoppe thider wold he lepe,
And til that he had all the sight ysein,
And danced wel, he wold not come agein;
And gadred him a meinie[5] of his sort,
To hoppe and sing, and maken swiche disport:
And ther they setten steven[6] for to mete
To plaien at the dis in swiche a strete.
For in the toun ne was ther no prentis,
That fairer coude caste a pair of dis
Than Perkin coude, and therto he was fre
Of his dispence, in place of privetee.[7]

[1] True play is bad play. [2] Gay. [3] Shade, grove
[4] Either jousting, or any public procession.
[5] A troop of mischievous fellows.—See *Tyrwhitt's gl.*
[6] They appointed. [7] Private business.

That fond[1] his maister wel in his chaffare,[2]
For often time he fond his box ful bare.
For sothly, a prentis, a revelour,
That hanteth[3] dis, riot and paramour,
His maister shal it in his shoppe abie,[4]
Al have he no part of the minstralcie.
For theft and riot they ben convertible,
Al can they play on giterne or ribible.
Revel and trouth, as in a low degree,
They ben ful wroth all day, as men may see.
This joly prentis with his maister abode,
Til he was neigh out of his prentishode,
Al were he snibbed bothe erly and late,
And somtime lad with revel to Newgate.
But at the last his maister him bethought
Upon a day, whan he his paper sought,
Of a proverbe, that saith this same word;
Wel bet is roten appel out of hord,
Than that it rote alle the remenant;
So fareth it by a riotous servant;
It is well lasse harm to let him pace,[5]
Than he shende[6] all the servants in the place.
Therfore his maister yaf him a quitance,
And bad him go, with sorwe and with meschance.
And thus this joly prentis had his leve:
Now let him riot all the night or leve.
And for ther n'is no thefe without a louke,[7]
That helpeth him to wasten and to souke
Of that he briben[8] can, or borwe may,
Anon he sent his bed and his array
Unto a compere of his owen sort,
That loved dis, and riot, and disport;
And had a wif, that held for contenance
A shoppe, and swived for hire sustenance.
* * * * * * * *

[1] Found. [2] Traffic, merchandise. [3] Haunteth, is given to.
[4] Suffer for it in the "till." [5] Go. [6] Ruin
[7] A receiver. [8] Steal.

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGUE.

4421–4454.

Our hoste saw wel that the brighte sonne
The arc of his artificial day had ronne
The fourthe part, and half an houre and more;
And though he were not depe expert in lore,
He wiste it was the eighte and twenty day
Of April, that is messager to May;
And saw wel that the shadow of every tree
Was as in lengthe of the same quantitee
That was the body erect, that caused it;
And therfore by the shadow he tok his wit,
That Phebus, which that shone so clere and bright,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on hight;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten of the clok, he gan conclude;
And sodenly he plight his hors aboute.
Lordings, quod he, I warne you all this route,[1]
The fourthe partie of this day is gon.
Now for the love of God and of Seint John
Leseth no time, as ferforth as ye may.
Lordings, the time it wasteth night and day,
And steleth from us, what prively sleping,
And what thurgh negligence in our waking,
As doth the streme, that turneth never again,
Descending fro the montagne into a plain.
Wel can Senek and many a philosophre
Bewailen time, more than gold in coffre.
For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of time shendeth us, quod he.
It wol not come again withouten drede,
No more than wol Malkins maidenhede,[2]
Whan she hath lost it in hire wantonnesse.
Let us not moulen[3] thus in idlenesse.
Sire man of Lawe, quod he, so have ye blis,
Tell us a tale anon, as forword is.[4]

[1] Party.
[2] A common proverb.
[3] Grow mouldy.
[4] As is stipulated.

Ye ben submitted thurgh your free assent
To stonde in this cas at my jugement.
Acquiteth you now, and holdeth your behest;
Than have ye don your devoir at the lest.
Hoste, quod he, *de par dieux jeo assente*,
To breken forword is not min entente.
Behest is dette, and I wold hold it fayn
All my behest, I can no better sayn.
For swiche lawe as man yeveth another wight,
He shuld himselven usen it by right.
Thus wol our text: but natheles certain
I can right now no thrifty tale sain,
But Chaucer (though he can but lewedly[1]
On metres and on riming craftily)
Hath sayd hem, in swiche English as he can,
Of olde time, as knoweth many a man.
And if he have not sayd hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath sayd hem in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
Mo than Ovide made of mentioun
In his *Epistolis*, than ben ful olde.
What shuld I tellen hem, sin they ben tolde?
In youthe he made of Ceys[2] and Alcyon,
And sithen hath he spoke of everich on
Thise noble wives, and thise lovers eke.
Who so that wol his large volume seke

[1] Ignorantly.

[2] The story of Ceyx and Alcyone is related in the introduction to the poem, which was for some time called "*the Dreme of Chaucer*," but which, in the MSS. Fairf. 16. and Bod. 638 is more properly entitled "*the booke of the Duchesse*." The following note, which has been prefixed to it in all the later editions, is in MS. Fairf. in the handwriting of John Stowe. "*By the person of a mourning Knight sitting under an oke is meant John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, greatly lamenting the death of one whom hee entirely loved, supposed to be Blanche the Duchesse.*" I believe John is very right in his conjecture. Chaucer himself, in his Leg. of G. W. 418. says, that he made "*the deth of Blaunche the Duchesse:*" and in the poem now under consideration he plainly alludes to her name, ver. 948.

"And faire *white* she hete;
That was my ladys name right."

On the other hand, the knight is represented, ver. 455, 6,

"Of the age of *four and twenty* yere,
Upon his berde but litel here"—

whereas John of Gaunt, at the death of Blanche in 1369, was about *nine and twenty* years of age. But this perhaps was a designed misrepresentation.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Cleped the seintes legende of Cupide:[1]
Ther may he se the large woundes wide
Of Lucrece, and of Babylon Thisbe;
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee;
The tree of Phillis for hire Demophon;
The plaint of Deianire, and Hermion,
Of Adriane, and Ysiphilee;
The barreine ile[2] stonding in the see;
The dreint[3] Leandre for his fayre Hero;
The teres of Heleine, and eke the wo
Of Briseide, and of Ladomia;
The crueltee of thee, quene Medea,
Thy litel children hanging by the hals,[4]
For thy Jason, that was of love so fals.
O Hipermestra, Penelope, Alceste,
Your wifhood he commendeth with the beste.
But certainly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wicke ensample of Canace,
That loved hire owen brother sinfully;
(Of all swiche cursed stories I say fy)
Or elles of Tyrius Appolonius,
How that the cursed king Antiochus
Beraft his doughter of hire maidenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hire threw upon the pavement.
And therfore he of ful avisement
N'old never write in non of his sermons
Of swiche unkinde abhominations;
Ne I wol non reherse, if that I may.
But of my tale how shal I don this day?
Me were loth to be likened douteles
To Muses, that men clepe Pierides,[5]

[1] In the Editt. it is called *the Legende of good women;* in MS. Fairf. 16. *the Legendis of* ix *gode women.* According to Lydgate, Prol to Boccace, the number was to have been *nineteen;* and perhaps the Legende itself affords some ground for this notion. See ver. 183. and C. L. ver. 108. But this number was probably never completed, and the last story of Hypermnestra is seemingly unfinished.

In an imperfect copy of the *Master of the Game*, dedicated to Henry, eldest son of Henry IV. (MS. *Harl.* 6824.) is the following passage. "As Chaucer seithe in his prolog. of xxv. good wymmen, by writing have men mynde of thynges passed."—See ver. 18. *Tyrwhitt.*

[2] *I. e.*, Sestos, where Hero dwelt. [3] Drowned.

[4] The neck. But the classical legends generally represent them as slain by the sword.

[5] This seems rather to refer to the daughters of Pierus, changed into pies, for contending with the muses.

(*Metamorphoseos*[1] wote that I mene)
But natheles I recche[2] not a bene,
Though I come after him with hawebake,[3]
I speke in prose, and let him rimes make.
And with that word, he with a sobre chere
Began his tale, and sayde, as ye shull here.

The Man of Lawes Tale.

O SCATHFUL harm, condition of poverte,
With thirst, with cold, with hunger so confounded,
To asken helpe thee shameth in thin herte,
If thou non ask, so sore art thou ywounded,
That veray nede unwrappeth al thy wound hid.
Maugre thin hed thou must for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy dispence.

Thou blamest Crist, and sayst ful bitterly,
He misdeparteth[4] richesse temporal;
Thy neighebour thou witest[5] sinfully,
And sayst, thou hast a litel, and he hath all:
Parfay[6] (sayst thou) somtime he reken shall,
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the glede,[7]
For he nought helpeth needful in hir nede.

Herken what is the sentence of the wise,
Bet is to dien than have indigence.
Thy selve neighebour wol thee despise,
If thou be poure, farewel thy reverence.
Yet of the wise man take this sentence,
Alle the dayes of poure men ben wicke,
Beware therfore or thou come to that pricke.

[1] *I. e.*, Ovid, *Met.* l. v. We may observe that Chaucer uses classical genitive cases as nominatives.—So *Eneados, Judicum, etc.*
[2] Carv.
[3] Neither the reading, nor the meaning of this word can be determined.
[4] Ill divideth. [5] Blamest. [6] By my faith. [7] Fire.

If thou be poure, thy brother hateth thee,
And all thy frendes fleen fro thee, alas!
O riche marchants, ful of wele ben ye,
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas,
Your bagges ben not filled with ambes as,[1]
But with sis[2] cink, that renneth for your chance,
At Cristenmasse mery may ye dance.

Ye seken lond and see for your winninges,
As wise folk ye knowen all th' estat
Of regnes, ye ben fathers of tidinges,
And tales, both of pees and of debat:
I were right now of tales desolat,
N' ere that a marchant, gon in many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which that ye shull here.

In Surrie[3] whilom dwelt a compagnie
Of chapmen rich, and therto sad[4] and trewe,
That wide where senten hir spicerie,
Clothes of gold, and satins riche of hewe.
Hir chaffare[5] was so thriftly and so newe,
That every wight hath deintee[5] to chaffare
With hem, and eke to sellen hem hir ware.

Now fell it, that the maisters of that sort
Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende,
Were it for chapmanhood or for disport,
Non other message wold they thider sende,
But comen hemself to Rome, this is the ende:
And in swiche place as thought hem avantage
For hir entente, they taken hir herbergage.

Sojourned han these marchants in that toun
A certain time, as fell to hir plesance:
And so befell, that the excellent renoun
Of the emperoures doughter dame Custance
Reported was, with every circumstance,
Unto these Surrien marchants, in swiche wise
Fro day to day, as I shal you devise,

This was the commun vois of every man:
Our emperour of Rome, God him se,[7]
A doughter hath, that sin the world began,

[1] Two aces, at dice. [2] Six.
[3] Syria. [4] Serious. [5] Merchandise.
[6] Values highly. [7] *I. e.* preserve.

To reken as wel hire goodnesse as beaute,
N' as never swiche another as is she:
I pray to God in honour hire sustene,
And wold she were of all Europe the quene.

In hire is high beaute withouten pride,
Youthe, withouten grenehed or folie:
To all hire werkes vertue is hire guide;
Humblesse hath slaien in hire tyrannie:
She is mirrour of alle curtesie,
Hire herte is veray chambre of holinesse,
Hire hond ministre of fredom for almesse.

And all this vois was soth,[1] as God is trewe,
But now to purpos let us turne agein.
These marchants han don fraught hir shippes newe,
And whan they han this blisful maiden sein,
Home to Surrie ben they went ful fayn,
And don hir nedes, as they han don yore,
And liven in wele, I can say you no more.

Now fell it, that these marchants stood in grace
Of him that was the Soudan[2] of Surrie:
For whan they came from any strange place
He wold of his benigne curtesie
Make hem good chere, and besily espie
Tidings of sundry regnes, for to lere[3]
The wonders that they mighte seen or here.

Amonges other thinges specially
These marchants han him told of dame Custance
So gret noblesse, in ernest seriously,
That this Soudan hath caught so gret plesance
To han hire figure in his remembrance,
That all his lust, and all his besy cure
Was for to love hire, while his lif may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large book,
Which that men clepe the heven, ywritten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love shuld han his deth, alas!
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,
Is writen, God wot, who so coud it rede,
The deth of every man withouten drede.[4]

[1] This report was true. [2] Soldan. [3] Learn. [4] Doubt.

In sterres many a winter therbeforn
Was writ the deth of Hector, Achilles,
Of Pompey, Julius, or they were born;
The strif of Thebes; and of Hercules,
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes ben so dull,
That no wight can wel rede it at the full.

This Soudan for his prive councel sent,
And shortly of this matere for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entent,
And sayd hem certain, but he might have grace
To han Custance, within a litel space,
He n'as but ded, and charged hem in hie
To shapen for his lif som remedie.

Diverse men, diverse thinges saiden;
They argumentes casten up and doun;
Many a subtil reson forth they laiden;
They speken of magike, and abusion;[1]
But finally, as in conclusion,
They cannot seen in that non avantage,
Ne in non other way, save mariage.

Than saw they therin swiche difficultee
By way of reson, for to speke all plain,
Because ther was swiche diversitee
Betwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn,
They trowen that no cristen prince wold fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,
That us was yeven by Mahound[2] our prophete.

And he answered: Rather than I lese
Custance, I wol be cristened douteles:
I mote ben hires,[3] I may non other chese,
I pray you hold your arguments in pees,
Saveth my lif, and beth not reccheles[4]
To geten hire that hath my lif in cure,
For in this wo I may not long endure.

What nedeth greter dilatation?
I say, by tretise and ambassatrie,
And by the popes mediation,
And all the chirche, and all the chevalrie,
That in destruction of Maumetrie,

[1] Impropriety. [2] Mohammed. [3] I must be hers. [4] Careless.

And in encrese of Cristes lawe dere,
They ben accorded so as ye may here;

How that the Soudan and his baronage,
And all his lieges shuld ycristened be,
And he shal han Custance in mariage,
And certain gold, I n'ot what quantitee,
And hereto finden suffisant suretee.
The same accord is sworne on eyther side;
Now, fair Custance, almighty God thee gide.

Now wolden som men waiten, as I gesse,
That I shuld tellen all the purveiance,
The which that the emperour of his noblesse
Hath shapen for his doughter dame Custance.
Wel may men know that so gret ordinance
May no man tellen in a litel clause,
As was arraied for so high a cause.

Bishopes ben shapen with hire for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, and knightes of renoun,
And other folk ynow, this is the end.
And notified is thurghout al the toun,
That every wight with gret devotioun
Shuld prayen Crist, that he this mariage
Receive in gree, and spede this viage.[1]

The day is comen of hire departing,
I say the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no longer tarying,
But forward they hem dressen all and some.
Custance, that was with sorwe all overcome,
Ful pale arist,[2] and dresseth hire to wende,
For wel she seth ther n'is non other ende.

Alas! what wonder is it though she wept?
That shal be sent to straunge nation
Fro frendes, that so tendrely hire kept,
And to be bounde under subjection
Of on, she knoweth not his condition.
Housbondes ben all good, and han ben yore,
That knowen wives, I dare say no more.

[1] Expedition. [2] Arose.

Fader, (she said) thy wretched child Custance,
Thy yonge doughter, fostered up so soft,
And ye, my moder, my soveraine plesance
Over all thing, (out taken Crist on loft)[1]
Custance your child hire recommendeth oft
Unto your grace; for I shal to Surrie,
Ne shal I never seen you more with eye.

Alas! unto the Barbare nation
I muste gon, sin that it is your will:
But Crist, that starfe[2] for our redemption,
So yeve me grace his hestes[3] to fulfill,
I wretched woman no force though I spill;[4]
Women arn borne to thraldom and penance,
And to ben under mannes governance.

I trow at Troye whan Pirrus brake the wall,
Or Ilion brent, or Thebes the citee,
Ne at Rome for the harm thurgh Hanniball,
That Romans hath venqueshed times three,
N'as herd swiche tendre weping for pitee,
As in the chambre was for hire parting,
But forth she mote,[5] wheder she wepe or sing.

O firste moving cruel firmament,
With thy diurnal swegh that croudest[6] ay,
And hurtlest[7] all from Est til Occident,[8]
That naturally wold hold another way;
Thy crouding set the heven in swiche array
At the beginning of this fierce viage,
That cruel Mars hath slain this marriage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helpeles fall, alas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.
O Mars, o Atyzar,[9] as in this cas;
O feble Mone,[10] unhappy ben thy pas,
Thou knittest thee ther thou art not received,
Ther thou were wel fro thennes art thou weived.[11]

[1] Save only Christ on high. [2] Died.
[3] Behest. [4] Perish. [5] Must go.
[6] Dost push together. [7] Drivest. [8] From east to west.
[9] Probably "burning," "destructive;" but the interpretation of these barbarous astrological terms is of little consequence.
[10] Moon. [11] Departed.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, alas!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?
Is no time bet[1] than other in swiche cas?
Of viage is ther non electioun,
Namely to folk of high conditioun,
Nat whan a rote[2] is of a birth yknowe?
Alas! we ben to lewed,[3] or to slow.[4]

To ship is brought this woful faire maid
Solempnely with every circumstance:
Now Jesu Crist be with you all, she said.
Ther n'is no more, but farewel fair Custance.
She peineth hire to make good countenance,
And forth I let hire sayle in this manere,
And turne I wol againe to my matere.

The mother of the Soudan, well of vices,
Espied hath hire sones pleine entente,
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices:
And right anon she for her conseil sente,
And they ben comen, to know what she mente,
And whan assembled was this folk in fere,
She set hire doun, and sayd as ye shul here.

Lordes, (she sayd) ye knowen everich on
How that my sone in point is for to lete[5]
The holy lawes of our Alkaron,
Yeven by Goddes messager Mahomete:
But on avow to grete God I hete,[6]
The lif shal rather out of my body sterte,
Than Mahometes lawe out of myn herte.

What shuld us tiden of[7] this newe lawe
But thraldom to our bodies and penance,
And afterward in helle to ben drawe,
For we reneied[8] Mahound our creance?
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,
As I shal say, assenting to my lore?[9]
And I shal make us sauf for evermore.

[1] Better.
[2] A *root*, or *radix*, is any certain time taken at pleasure, from which, as an era, the celestial motions are to be computed.—*Tyrwhitt, g'.*
[3] Ignorant.
[4] Stupid.
[5] Is on the point of abandoning.
[6] Promise.
[7] Betide us from.
[8] Denied.
[9] Counsel.

They sworen, and assented every man
To live with hire and die, and by hire stond:
And everich on, in the best wise he can,
To strengthen hire shal all his frendes fond.
And she hath this emprise ytaken in hond,
Which ye shull heren that I shal devise,
And to hem all she spake right in this wise.

We shul first feine us cristendom to take;
Cold water shal not greve us but a lite:
And I shal swiche a feste and revel make,
That, as I trow, I shal the Soudan quite.
For tho his wif be cristened never so white,
She shal have nede to wash away the rede,
Though she a font of water with hire lede.

O Soudannesse, rote of iniquitee,
Virago thou Semyramee[1] the second,
O serpent under femininitee,
Like to the serpent depe in helle ybound:
O feined woman, all that may confound
Vertue and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.

O Sathan envious, sin thilke day
That thou were chased from our heritage,
Wel knowest thou to woman the olde way.
Thou madest Eva bring us in servage,
Thou wolt fordon[2] this cristen mariage:
Thin instrument so (wala wa the while!)
Makest thou of women whan thou wolt begile.

This Soudannesse, whom I thus blame and warrie,
Let prively hire conseil gon hir way:
What shuld I in this tale longer tarie?
She rideth to the Soudan on a day,
And sayd him, that she wold reneie hire lay,
And christendom of prestes hondes fong,[3]
Repenting hire she hethen was so long.

Beseching him to don hire that honour,
That she might han the cristen folk to fest:
To plesen hem I wol do my labour.

[1] Semiramis. [2] You wished undone. [3] Receive.

The Soudan saith, I wol don at your hest,
And kneling, thanked hire of that request:
So glad he was, he n'iste not what to say,
She kist hire sone, and home she goth hire way.

Arrived ben these cristen folk to londe
In Surrie, with a gret solempne route,
And hastily this Soudan sent his sonde,[1]
First to his mother, and all the regne aboute,
And sayd, his wif was comen out of doute,
And praide hem for to riden again[2] the quene,
The honour of his regne to sustene.

Gret was the presse, and riche was th' array
Of Surriens and Romanes met in fere.[3]
The mother of the Soudan riche and gay
Received hire with all so glad a chere,
As any mother might hire doughter dere:
And to the nexte citee ther beside
A softe pas[4] solempnely they ride.

Nought trow I, the triumph of Julius,
Of which that Lucan maketh swiche a bost,
Was realler, or more curious,
Than was th' assemblee of this blisful host:
Butte this scorpion, this wicked gost,[5]
The Soudannesse, for all hire flattering
Cast[6] under this ful mortally to sting.

The Soudan cometh himself sone after this
So really,[7] that wonder is to tell:
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.
And thus in mirth and joye I let hem dwell.
The fruit of this matere is that I tell.
Whan time came, men thought it for the best
That revel stint,[8] and men go to hir rest.

The time come is, this olde Soudannesse
Ordeined hath the feste of which I tolde,
And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse
In general, ya bothe yonge and olde.
Ther may men fest and realtee[9] beholde,

[1] Message.
[2] To ride to meet.
[3] Together.
[4] At a gentle pace.
[5] Spirit.
[6] Devised.
[7] Royally.
[8] Cease.
[9] Royalty.

And deintees mo than I can you devise,
But all to dere they bought it or they rise.[1]

O soden wo, that ever art successour
To worldly blis, spreint[2] is with bitternesse
Th' ende of the joye of our worldly labour:
Wo occupieth the fyn[3] of our gladnesse.
Herken this conseil for thy sikernesse:
Upon thy glade day have in thy minde
The unware wo of harm, that cometh behinde.

For shortly for to tellen at a word,
The Soudan and the cristen everich on
Ben[4] all to-hewe, and stiked[5] at the bord,
But it were only dame Custance alone.
This olde Soudannesse, this cursed crone,
Hath with hire frendes don this cursed dede,
For she hireself wold all the contree lede.

Ne ther was Surrien non that was converted,
That of the conseil of the Soudan wot,
That he n'as all to-hewe, er he asterted:[6]
And Custance han they taken anon iote-hot,[7]
And in a ship all stereles (God wot)
They han hire set, and bidden hire lerne sayle
Out of Surrie againward to Itaille.

A certain tresor that she thither ladde,
And soth to sayn, vitaille gret plentee,
They han hire yeven, and clothes eke she hadde,
And forth she sayleth in the salte see:
O my Custance, ful of benignitee,
O emperoures yonge doughter dere,
He that is lord of fortune be thy stere.

She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous vois
Unto the crois of Crist thus sayde she.
O clere, o weleful auter,[8] holy crois,
Red of the lambes blood ful of pitee,
That wesh the world fro the old iniquitee,

[1] They paid too dear for it ere they left the banquet. [2] Sprinkled.
[3] End. [4] Will be. [5] Cut down and stabbed.
[6] Started to go. [7] Full speed. [8] O author of blessings.

Me fro the fende,[1] and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe.

Victorious tree[2] protection of trewe,
That only worthy were for to bere
The king of heven, with his woundes newe,
The white lamb, that hurt was with a spere;
Flemer[3] of fendes, out of him and here
On which thy limmes faithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and yeve me might my lif to amenden.

Yeres and dayes fleet this creature
Thurghout the see of Grece, unto the straite
Of Maroc, as it was hire aventure:
On many a sory mele[4] now may she baite,[5]
After hire deth ful often may she waite,[6]
Or[7] that the wilde waves wol hire drive
Unto the place ther as she shal arive.

Men mighten asken, why she was not slain?
Eke at the feste who might hire body save?
And I answer to that demand again,
Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave,
Ther every wight, save he, master or knave,
Was with the leon frette,[8] or he asterte?
No wight but God, that he bare in his herte.

God list to shew his wonderful miracle
In hire, for we shuld seen his mighty werkes:
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,[9]
By certain menes oft, as knowen clerkes,
Doth thing for certain ende, that ful derke is
To mannes wit, that for our ignorance
Ne can nat know his prudent purveiance.[10]

Now sith she was not at the feste yslawe,[11]
Who kepte hire fro the drenching in the see?
Who kepte Jonas in the fishes mawe,
Til he was spouted up at Ninivee?
Wel may men know, it was no wight but he

[1] Fiend. [2] The cross. [3] Banisher. [4] Meal.
[5] Feed. [6] Await. [7] Before. [8] Devoured.
[9] A remedy, a corruption from the Fr. *theriaque*.
[10] Providence. [11] Slain.

That kept the peple Ebraike fro drenching,
With drye feet thurghout the see passing.

Who bade the foure spirits of tempest,
That power han to anoyen lond and see,
Both north and south, and also west and est,
Anoyen neyther see, ne lond, ne tree?
Sothly the commander of that was he
That fro the tempest ay this woman kepte,
As wel whan she awoke as whan she slepte.

Wher might this woman mete and drinke have?
Three yere and more, how lasteth hire vitaille?
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave
Or in desert? no wight but Crist *sans faille*.
Five thousand folk it was as gret marvaille
With loves five and fishes two to fede:
God sent his foyson[1] at hire grete nede.

She driveth forth into our Ocean
Thurghout our wide see, til at the last
Under an hold, that nempnen[2] I ne can,
Fer in Northumberlond, the wave hire cast,
And in the sand hire ship stiked so fast,
That thennes wolde[3] it not in all a tide:
The wille of Crist was that she shulde abide.

The constable of the castle doun is fare[4]
To seen this wrecke, and al the ship he sought,
And fond[5] this wery woman ful of care;
He fond also the tresour that she brought:
In hire langage mercy she besought,
The lif out of hire body for to twinne,[6]
Hire to deliver of wo that she was inne.

A maner Latin corrupt was hire speche,
But algate[7] therby was she understonde.
The constable, whan him list no lenger seche,
This woful woman brought he to the londe.
She kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes sonde;
But what she was, she wolde no man seye
For foule ne faire, though that she shulde deye.

[1] Abundance. [2] Name. [3] Thence went.
[4] Gone. [5] Found.
[6] Pluck, snatch. [7] Nevertheless.

She said, she was so mased[1] in the see,
That she forgate hire minde, by hire trouth.
The constable hath of hir so gret pitee
And eke his wif, that they wepen for routh:[2]
She was so diligent withouten slouth[3]
To serve and plesen everich in that place,
That all hire love, that loken in hire face.

The constable and dame Hermegild his wif
Were payenes,[4] and that contree every wher;
But Hermegild loved Custance as hire lif;
And Custance hath so long sojourned ther
In orisons, with many a bitter tere,
Til Jesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegild, constablesse of that place.

In all that lond no cristen dorste route;[5]
All cristen folk ben fled fro that contree
Thurgh payenes, that conquereden all aboute
The plages of the North by lond and see.
To Wales fled the cristianitee
Of olde Bretons, dwelling in this ile;
Ther was hir refuge for the mene while.

But yet n' ere[6] cristen Bretons so exiled,
That ther n'ere som which in hir privitee
Honoured Crist, and hethen folk begiled;[7]
And neigh the castle swiche ther dwelten three:
That on of hem was blind, and might not see,
But it were with thilke eyen of his minde,
With which men mowen see whan they ben blinde.

Bright was the sonne, as in that sommers day,
For which the constable and his wif also
And Custance, han ytake the righte way
Toward the see, a furlong way or two,
To plaien, and to romen to and fro;
And in hir walk this blinde man they mette,
Croked and olde, with eyen fast yshette.

[1] Puzzled. [2] Compassion. [3] Sloth.
[4] Pagans. [5] Come. [6] Were not.
[7] Deceived.

In the name of Crist (cried this blinde Breton)
Dame Hermegild, yeve me my sight again.
This lady wexe afraied of that soun,
Lest that hire husbond, shortly for to sain,
Wold hire for Jesu Cristes love have slain,
Til Custance made hire bold, and bad hire werche
The will of Crist, as doughter of holy cherche.

The constable wexe abashed of that sight,
And sayde; What amounteth all this fare?
Custance answered; Sire, it is Cristes might,
That helpeth folk out of the fendes snare:
And so ferforth she gan our lay[1] declare,
That she the constable, er that it were eve,
Converted, and on Crist made him beleve.

This constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speke, ther as he Custance fond
But kept it strongly many a winter space,
Under Alla, king of Northumberlond,
That was ful wise, and worthy of his hond
Againe the Scottes, as men may wel here;
But tourne I wol againe to my matere.

Sathan,[2] that ever us waiteth to begile,
Saw of Custance all hire perfectioun,
And cast anon how he might quite hire while,[3]
And made a yonge knight, that dwelt in that toun,
Love hire so hote of foule affectioun,
That verayly him thought that he shuld spille,[4]
But he of hire might ones han his wille.

He woeth hire, but it availeth nought,
She wolde do no sinne by no wey:
And for despit, he compassed his thought
To maken hire on shameful deth to dey.
He waiteth whan the constable is away

[1] Law, creed.

[2] The following plot of the knight against Constance, from this ver. to ver. 5030. and also her adventure with the steward, from ver. 5330 to ver. 5344, are both to be found, with some small variations, in a story in the *Gesta Romanorum*, ch. 101. Occleve has versified the whole story; as he has another from the same collection, *De Johnatha et muliere maldē*, ch. 54. *Ibid.* (cxx. *Edit.*)—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Requite her labour.

[4] Perish.

And prively upon a night he crepte
In Hermegildes chambre while she slepte.

Wery, forwaked[1] in hire orisons,
Slepeth Custance, and Hermegilde also.
This knight, thurgh Sathanas temptations,
All softely is to the bed ygo,
And cut the throte ot Hermegilde atwo,
And layd the blody knif by dame Custance,
And went his way, ther God yeve him mischance.

Sone after cometh this constable home again,
And eke Alla, that king was of that lond,
And saw his wife despitously yslain,
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the blody knif he fond
By dame Custance, alas! what might she say?
For veray wo hire wit was all away.

To king Alla was told all this mischance,
And eke the time, and wher, and in what wise,
That in a ship was fonden this Custance,
As here before ye han herd me devise:
The kinges herte of pitee gan agrise,[2]
Whan he saw so benigne a creature
Falle in disese and in misaventure.

For as the lamb toward his deth is brought,
So stant this innocent beforn the king:
This false knight, that hath this treson wrought,
Bereth hire in hond[3] that she hath don this thing:
But natheles ther was gret murmuring
Among the peple, and sayn they cannot gesse
That she had don so gret a wickednesse.

For they han seen hire ever so vertuous,
And loving Hermegild right as hire lif:
Of this bare witnesse everich in that hous,
Save he that Hermegild slow with his knif:
This gentil king hath caught a gret motif
Of this witness, and thought he wold enquere
Deper in this cas, trouthe for to lere.

[1] Having long kept awake. [2] To shudder.
[3] Accuseth her.

Alas! Custance, thou hast no champion,
Ne fighten canst thou not, so wala wa!
But he that starf[1] for our redemption,
And bond Sathan, and yet lith[2] ther he lay,
So be thy stronge champion this day:
For but if Crist on thee miracle kithe,[3]
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slaine as swithe.[4]

She set hire doune on knees, and thus she sayde;
Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Fro false blame, and thou merciful mayde,
Mary I mene, doughter to seint Anne,
Beforn whos child angels singen Osanne,
If I be gilteles of this felonie,
My socour be, or elles shal I die.

Have ye not seen somtime a pale face
(Among a prees)[5] of him that hath ben lad
Toward his deth, wher as he geteth no grace,
And swiche a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighten know him that was so bestad,[6]
Amonges all the faces in that route,
So stant Custance, and loketh hire aboute.

O quenes living in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ye ladies everich on,
Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee;
An emperoures doughter stant alone;
She hath no wight to whom to make hire mone;
O blood real,[7] that stondest in this drede,
Fer ben[8] thy frendes in thy grete nede.

This Alla king hath swiche compassioun,
As gentil herte is fulfilled of pitee,
That fro his eyen ran the water doun.
Now hastily do fecche a book, quod he;
And if this knight wol sweren, how that she
This woman slow, yet wol we us avise,
Whom that we wol that shal ben our justice.

[1] Died.
[2] I suppose, "subdued," "softened."—See *Tyrwhitt's gl.* s. v. *Lithe.*
[3] Shew, set forth. [4] Immediately. [5] Press, crowd
[6] Situated. [7] Royal. [8] Far were.

A Breton book, written with Evangiles,
Was fet, and on this book he swore anon
She giltif was, and in the mene whiles
An hond him smote upon the nekke bone,
That doun he fell at ones as a stone:
And both his eyen brost out of his face
In sight of every body in that place.

A vois was herd, in general audience,
That sayd; Thou hast desclandred[1] gilteles
The doughter of holy chirche in high presence;
Thus hast thou don, and yet hold I my pees.
Of this mervaille agast was all the prees,[2]
As mased folk they stonden everich on
For drede of wreche,[3] save Custance alone.

Gret was the drede and eke the repentance
Of hem that hadden wronge suspection
Upon this sely[4] innocent Custance;
And for this miracle, in conclusion,
And by Custances mediation,
The king, and many another in that place,
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace.

This false knight was slain for his untrouthe
By jugement of Alla hastily;
And yet Custance had of his deth gret routhe;
And after this Jesus of his mercy
Made Alla wedden ful solempnely
This holy woman, that is so bright and shene.
And thus hath Crist ymade Custance a quene.

But who was woful (if I shal not lie)
Of this wedding but Donegild and no mo,
The kinges mother, ful of tyrannie?
Hire thoughte hire cursed herte brast atwo;
She wolde not that hire sone had do so;
Hire thoughte a despit, that he shulde take
So strange a creature unto his make.

Me list not of the chaf ne of the stre
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.
What shulde I tellen of the realtee
Of this mariage, or which cours goth beforn,
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?

[1] Slandered. [2] Crowd. [3] Vengeance. [4] Harmless.

The fruit of every tale is for to say;
They ete and drinke, and dance, and sing, and play.

They gon to bed, as it was skill and right,
For though that wives ben ful holy thinges,
They mosten take in patience a night
Swiche maner necessaries, as ben plesinges
To folk that han ywedded hem with ringes,
And lay a lite hir holinesse aside
As for the time, it may no bet betide.

On hire he gat a knave childe[1] anon,
And to a bishop, and his constable eke
He toke his wife to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotland ward, his fomen for to seke.
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke
So long is gon with childe til that still
She halt[2] hire chambre, abiding Cristes will.

The time is come, a knave child she bere;
Mauricius at the fontstone they him calle.
This constable doth forth come a messager,
And wrote unto his king that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tiding is betalle,
And other tidings spedeful for to say,
He hath the lettre, and forth he goth his way.

This messager, to don his avantage,
Unto the kinges mother rideth swithe,[3]
And salueth[4] hire ful faire in his langage.
Madame, quod he, ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanken God an hundred thousand sithe;
My lady quene hath child, withouten doute,
To joye and blisse of all this regne aboute.

Lo here the lettre seled of this thing,
That I most bere in all the hast I may:
If ye wol ought unto your sone the king,
I am your servant bothe night and day.
Donegilde answerd, As now at this time nay;
But here I wol all night thou take thy rest,
To-morwe wol I say thee what me lest.

[1] A boy. [2] Keepeth. [3] Quickly. [4] Saluteth.

This messager drank sadly ale and wine,
And stolen were his lettres prively
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine;
And contrefeted was ful subtilly
Another lettre, wrought ful sinfully
Unto the king directe of this matere
Fro his constable, as ye shal after here.

This lettre spake, the quene delivered was
Of so horrible a fendliche[1] creature,
That in the castle non so hardy was
That any while[2] dorste therein endure:
The mother was an elfe by aventure
Ycome, by charmes or by sorcerie,
And everich man hateth hire compagnie.

Wo was this king whan he this lettre had sein,
But to no wight he told his sorwes sore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again;
Welcome the sonde[3] of Crist for evermore
To me, that am now lerned in this lore:
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesance,
My lust I put all in thyn ordinance.

Kepeth this child, al be it foule or faire,
And eke my wif unto min home coming:
Crist whan him list may senden me an heire
More agreable than this to my liking.
This lettre he seled, prively weping,
Which to the messager was taken sone,
And forth he goth, ther is no more to done.

O messager, fulfilled of dronkenesse,
Strong is thy breth, thy limmes faltren ay,
And thou bewreiest alle secrenesse;
Thy mind is lorne, thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is tourned in a new array;
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hid withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have non English digne[4]
Unto thy malice, and thy tirannie:
And therfore to the fende I thee resigne,
Let him enditen of thy traitorie.

[1] Fiendlike. [2] Should this be "wight?"
[3] The gift, that which Christ hath sent. [4] Adequate to describe.

Fy mannish,[1] fy; o nay by God I lie;
Fy fendliche spirit, for I dare wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.

This messager cometh fro the king again,
And at the kinges modres[2] court he light,
And she was of this messager ful fayn,[3]
And plesed him in all that ever she might.
He dranke, and wel his girdel underpight;[4]
He slepeth, and he snoreth in his gise
All night, until the sonne gan arise.

Eft[5] were his lettres stolen everich on,
And contrefeted lettres in this wise.
The king commanded his constable anon
Up[6] peine of hanging and of high jewise,[7]
That he ne shulde soffren in no wise
Custance within his regne for to abide
Three daies, and a quarter of a tide;

But in the same ship as he hire fond,
Hire and hire yonge sone, and all hire gere
He shulde put, and croude[8] hire fro the lond,
And charge hire, that she never eft[9] come there.
O my Custance, wel may thy ghost have fere,
And sleping in thy dreme ben in penance,
Whan Donegild cast[10] all this ordinance.

This messager on morwe whan he awoke,
Unto the castel halt the nexte way;
And to the constable he the lettre toke;
And whan that he this pitous lettre sey,
Ful oft he sayd alas, and wala wa;
Lord Crist, quod he, how may this world endure?
So ful of sinne is many a creature.

O mighty God, if that it be thy will,
Sin thou art rightful juge, how may it be
That thou wolt soffren innocence to spill[11]
And wicked folk regne in prosperitee?
A good Custance, alas! so wo is me,
That I mote be thy turmentour, or dey
On shames deth, ther is non other wey.

[1] "Thou human thing!" Used here as a term of reproach.
[2] Mother's. [3] Pleased, satisfied. [4] Stuffed.
[5] Again. [6] Upon. [7] Punishment.
[8] Drive. [9] Again. [10] Devised. [11] Perish.

Wepen both yong and old in al that place,
Whan that the king this cursed lettre sent:
And Custance with a dedly pale face
The fourthe day toward the ship she went:
But natheles she taketh in good entent
The will of Crist, and kneling on the strond
She sayde, Lord, ay welcome be thy sond.

He that me kepte fro the false blame,
While I was in the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe fro harme and eke fro shame
In the salt see, although I se not how:
As strong as ever he was, he is yet now,
In him trust I, and in his mother dere,
That is to me my sail and eke my stere.

Hire litel child lay weping in hire arm,
And kneling pitously to him she said,
Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee no harm:
With that hire couverchief of her hed she braid[1]
And over his litel eyen she it laid,
And in hire arme she lulleth it ful fast,
And into the heven hire eyen up she cast.

Mother, quod she, and maydenbright Marie,
Soth is, that thurgh womannes eggement
Mankind was lorne,[2] and damned ay to die,
For which thy child was on a crois yrent:
Thy blisful eyen saw all his turment,
Than is ther no comparison betwene
Thy wo, and any wo man may sustene.

Thou saw thy child yslain before thin eyen,
And yet now liveth my litel child parfay:[3]
Now, lady bright, to whom all woful crien,
Thou glory of womanhed, thou faire may,
Thou haven of refute, bright sterre of day
Rew on my child, that of thy gentillesse
Rewest on every rewful in distresse.

O litel child, alas! what is thy gilt,
That never wroughtest sinne as yet parde?[4]
Why wol thin harde father have thee spilt?
O mercy, dere constable, (quod she)
As let my litel child dwell here with thee:

[1] Took off. [2] Lost. [3] By my troth. [4] Par dieux.

And if thou darst not saven him fro blame,
So kisse him ones in his fadres name.

Therwith she loketh backward to the lond,
And saide; Farewel, housbond routheles!
And up she rist, and walketh doun the strond
Toward the ship, hire foloweth all the prees:[1]
And ever she praieth hire child to hold his pees,
And taketh hire leve, and with an holy entent
She blesseth hire, and into the ship she went.

Vitailled was the ship, it is no drede,[2]
Habundantly for hire a ful long space:
And other necessaries that shuld nede
She had ynow, heried be Goddes grace:
For wind and wether, almighty God purchace,
And bring hire home, I can no better say,
But in the see she driveth forth hire way.

Alla the king cometh home sone after this
Unto his castel, of the which I told,
And asketh wher his wif and his child is;
The constable gan about his herte cold,
And plainly all the matere he him told
As ye han herd, I can tell it no better,
And shewed the king his sele and his letter;

And sayde; Lord, as ye commanded me
Up peine of deth, so have I don certain.
This messager turmented was, til he
Moste beknowe, and tellen plat[3] and plain,
Fro night to night in what place he had lain:
And thus by wit and subtil enquering
Imagined was by whom this harm gan spring.

The hand was knowen that the lettre wrote,
And all the venime of this cursed dede;
But in what wise, certainly I n'ot.
The effect is this, that Alla out of drede[4]
His moder slew, that moun[5] men plainly rede,
For that she traitour was to hire ligeance:
Thus endeth this old Donegild with meschance.

[1] Crowd. [2] Doubt. [3] Flat
[4] Without doubt. [5] Must.

The sorwe that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wif and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it tellen may.
But now wol I agen to Custance go,
That fleteth in the see in peine and wo
Five yere and more, as liked Cristes sonde[1]
Or[2] that hire ship approched to the londe.

Under an hethen castel at the last,
(Of which the name in my text I not find)
Custance and eke hire child the see up cast.
Almighty God, that saved all mankind,
Have on Custance and on hire child som mind,
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsone[3]
In point to spill, as I shal tell you sone.

Doun fro the castel cometh ther many a wight
To gauren[4] on this ship, and on Custance:
But shortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes steward (God yeve him meschance)
A theef, that had reneyed our creance,
Came into the ship alone, and said, he wolde
Hire lemman be, whether she wolde or n'olde.[5]

Wo was this wretched woman tho begon,
Hire childe cried, and she cried pitously:
But blisful Mary halpe[6] hire right anon,
For with hire strogling wel and mightily
The theef fell over bord al sodenly,
And in the see he drenched for vengeance,
And thus hath Crist unwemmed[7] kept Custance.

O foule lust of luxurie, lo thin ende,
Nat only that thou faintest mannes mind,
But verailly thou wolt his body shende.[8]
Th'ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blinde,
Is complaining: how many may men find,
That not for werk somtime, but for th'entent
To don this sinne, ben other slain or shent.

[1] As it pleased Christ's will.
[2] Before.
[3] Presently.
[4] Gaze.
[5] Would not.
[6] Helped.
[7] Unspotted, undefiled.
[8] Ruin.

How may this weke woman han the strength
Hire to defend again this renegate?
O Golias, unmesurable of length,
How mighte David maken thee so mate?[1]
So yonge, and of armure so desolate,
How dorst he loke upon thy dredful face?
Wel may men seen it was but Goddes grace.

Who yaf[2] Judith corage or hardinesse
To sleen him Holofernes in his tent,
And to deliver out of wretchednesse
The peple of God? I say for this entent,
That right as God spirit of vigour sent
To hem, and saved hem out of meschance,
So sent he might and vigour to Custance.

Forth goth hire ship thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltare[3] and Septe,[4] driving alway,
Somtime West, and somtime North and South,
And somtime Est, ful many a wery day:
Til Cristes moder (blessed be she ay)
Hath shapen thurgh hire endeles goodnesse
To make an end of all hire bevinesse.

Now let us stint of Custance but a throw,
And speke we of the Romane emperour,
That out of Surrie hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and dishonour
Don to his doughter by a false traitour,
I mene the cursed wicked Soudannesse,
That at the fest let sleen[5] both more and lesse.

For which this emperour hath sent anon
His senatour, with real ordinance,
And other lordes, God wote, many on,
On Surriens to taken high vengeance:
They brennen, sleen, and bring hem to meschance
Ful many a day: but shortly this is th'ende,
Homward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.

This senatour repaireth with victorie
To Rome ward, sayling ful really,
And met the ship driving, as saith the storie,
In which Custance sitteth ful pitously:
Nothing ne knew he what she was, ne why

[1] Feeble, dead. [2] Gave. [3] Gibraltar.
[4] Ceuta, formerly Septa, opposite Gibraltar. [5] Caused to be slain.

She was in swiche array, ne she wil sey[1]
Of hire estat, though that she shulde dey.

He bringeth hire to Rome, and to his wif
He yaf hire, and hire yonge sone also:
And with the senatour she lad hire lif.
Thus can our lady bringen out of wo
Woful Custance, and many another mo:
And longe time dwelled she in that place,
In holy werkes ever, as was hire grace.

The senatoures wif hire aunte was,
But for all that she knew hire never the more:
I wol no longer tarien in this cas,
But to king Alla, which I spake of yore,
That for his wif wepeth and siketh sore,
I wol returne, and let I wol Custance
Under the senatoures governance.

King Alla, which that had his moder slain,
Upon a day fell in swiche repentance,
That if I shortly tellen shal and plain,
To Rome he cometh to receive his penance,
And putte him in the popes ordinance
In high and low, and Jesu Crist besought,
Foryeve his wicked werkes that he had wrought.

The fame anon thurghout the toun is born,
How Alla king shal come on pilgrimage,
By herbergeours[2] that wenten him beforn,
For which the senatour, as was usage,
Rode him againe, and many of his linage,
As wel to shewen his high magnificence,
As to don any king a reverence.

Gret chere doth this noble senatour
To king Alla, and he to him also;
Everich of hem doth other gret honour;
And so befell, that in a day or two
This senatour is to king Alla go
To fest, and shortly, if I shal not lie,
Custances sone went in his compagnie.

[1] Say, speak. [2] Harbingers, caterers for lodgings.

Som men wold sain[1] at requeste of Custance
This senatour hath lad this child to feste:
I may not tellen every circumstance,
Be as be may, ther was he at the leste:
But soth is this, that at his mothers heste
Beforn Alla, during the metes space,[2]
The child stood, loking in the kinges face.

This Alla king hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the senatour he said anon,
Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?
I no't, quod he, by God and by Seint John;
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
That I of wote: but shortly in a stound[3]
He told Alla how that this child was found.

But God wot, quod this senatour also,
So vertuous a liver in all my lif
Ne saw I never, as she, ne herd of mo
Of worldly woman, maiden, widewe or wif:
I dare wel sayn hire hadde lever[4] a knif
Thurghout hire brest, than ben a woman wikke[5]
Ther is no man could bring her to that prikke.

Now was this child as like unto Custance
As possible is a creature to be:
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Custance, and thereon mused he,
If that the childes moder were aught she
That is his wif, and prively he sighte,[6]
And sped him fro the table that he mighte.

Parfay, thought he, fantome[7] is in min hed.
I ought to deme of skilful jugement,
That in the salte see my wif is ded.
And afterward he made his argument;
What wot I, if that Crist have hider[8] sent
My wif by see, as wel as he hire lent
To my contree, fro thennes that she went?

[1] Say that.
[2] *I.e.*, during an interval between the courses of the dinner.
[3] Moment. [4] Liever, sooner. [5] Wicked.
[6] Sighed. [7] Some fancy. [8] Hither.

And after noon home with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chance.
This senatour doth Alla gret honour,
And hastily he sent after Custance:
But trusteth[1] wel, hire luste not to dance.
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde,
Unnethe upon hire feet she mighte stonde.

Whan Alla saw his wif, faire he hire grette,
And wept, that it was routhe for to see,
For at the firste look he on hire sette
He knew wel verily that it was she:
And she for sorwe, as domb stant as a tree:
So was hire herte shette[2] in hire distresse,
Whan she remembered his unkindenesse.

Twies she swouneth in his owen sight,
He wepeth and him excuseth pitously:
Now God, quod he, and all his halwes[3] bright
So wisly[4] on my soule as[5] have mercy,
That of youre harme as gilteles am I,
As is Maurice my sone, so like your face,
Elles the fend[6] me fetche out of this place.

Long was the sobbing and the bitter peine,
Or that hir woful hertes mighten cese,
Gret was the pitee for to here hem pleine,
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encrese.
I pray you all my labour to relese,
I may not tell hir wo until to-morwe,
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, whan that the soth[7] is wist,
That Alla gilteles was of hire wo,
I trow an hundred times han they kist,
And swiche a blisse is ther betwix hem two,
That save the joye that lasteth evermo,
Ther is non like, that any creature
Hath seen or shal, while that the world may dure.

[1] Trust ye. [2] Overwhelmed.
[3] Holiness, holy things or beings. "All hallows."
[4] Truly, certainly.
[5] Take "as" with "so" as a mere redundancy of expression; *Sic omnino, al.* [6] Fiend. [7] Truth.

Tho praied she hire husbond mekely
In releef of hire longe pitous pine,
That he wold pray hire fader specially,
That of his magestee he wold encline
To vouchesauf som day with him to dine:
She praied him eke, he shulde by no way
Unto hire fader no word of hire say.

Som men wold sayn, how that the child Maurice
Doth this message until this emperour:
But as I gesse, Alla was not so nice,
To him that is so soveraine of honour,
As he that is of cristen folk the flour,
Send any child, but it is bet to deme
He went himself, and so it may wel seme.

This emperour hath granted gentilly
To come to dinner, as he him besoughte:
And wel rede I, he loked besily
Upon this child, and on his doughter thought.
Alla goth to his inne, and as him ought
Arraied for this feste in every wise,
As feriorth[1] as his conning may suffice.

The morwe came, and Alla gan him dresse,
And eke his wif, this emperour to mete:
And forth they ride in joye and in gladnesse,
And whan she saw hire fader in the strete,
She light adoun and falleth him to tete.
Fader, quod she, your yonge child Custance
Is now ful clene out of your remembrance.

I am your doughter, your Custance, quod she,
That whilom ye han sent into Surrie;
It am I, fader, that in the salte see
Was put alone, and dampned for to die.
Now, goode fader, I you mercy crie,
Send me no more into non hethenesse,
But thanketh my lord here of his kindenesse.

Who can the pitous joye tellen all
Betwix hem thre, sin they ben thus ymette?
But of my tale make an ende I shal,

[1] Far forth, completely.

The day goth fast, I wol no longer lette.
Thise glade folk to dinner ben ysette,
In joy and blisse at mete I let hem dwell,
A thousand told wel more than I can tell.

This child Maurice was sithen emperour
Made by the pope, and lived cristenly,
To Cristes chirche did he gret honour:
But I let all his storie passen by,
Of Custance is my tale specially,
In the olde Romane gestes[1] men may find,
Maurices lif, I bere it not in mind.

This king Alla, when he his time sey,
With his Custance, his holy wif so swete,
To Englond ben they come the righte wey,
Ther as they live in joye and in quiete.
But litel while it lasteth I you hete,[2]
Joye of this world for time wol not abide,
Fro day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who lived ever in swiche delite o day,
That him ne meved[3] other conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som kin affray,
Envie, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I ne say but for this end this sentence,
That litel while in joye or in plesance
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.

For deth, that taketh of hie and low his rente,
Whan passed was a yere, even as I gesse,
Out of this world this king Alla he hente,
For whom Custance hath ful gret hevinesse.
Now let us praien God his soule blesse:
And dame Custance, finally to say,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hire way.

To Rome is come this holy creature,
And findeth ther hire frendes hole and soun[1]:
Now is she scaped all hire aventure:
And whan that she hire fader hath yfound,
Doun on hire knees falleth she to ground,

[1] *I.e.*, the *gesta Romanorum*.
[2] Promise
[3] Moved, stirred up.

Weping for tendernesse in herte blithe
She herieth God an hundred thousand sithe.[1]

In vertue and in holy almesse dede
They liven alle, and never asonder wende:
Till deth departeth hem, this lif they lede:
And fareth now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jesu Crist, that of his might may sende
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,
And kepe us alle that ben in this place.

[1] Times.

THE WIF OF BATHES PROLOGUE.[1]

5583–5614.

EXPERIENCE, though non auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynough for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage:
For, lordings, sin I twelf yere was of age,
(Thanked be God that is eterne on live)
Husbondes at chirche dore have I had five,
(If I so often might han wedded be)
And all were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was told, not longe time agon is,
That sithen Crist ne went never but onis[2]
To wedding, in the Cane of Galilee,
That by that ilke[3] ensample taught he me,
That I ne shulde wedded be but ones.
Lo, herke eke, which a sharpe word for the nones,
Beside a welle Jesu, God and man,
Spake in reprefe of the Samaritan:
Thou hast yhadde five husbonds, sayde he;
And thilke man, that now hath wedded thee,
Is not thyn husbond: thus said he certain;
What that he ment therby, I can not sain.
But that I aske, why that the fifthe man
Was non husbond to the Samaritan?
How many might she have in mariage?
Yet herd I never tellen in min age
Upon this noumbre diffinitioun;
Men may devine, and glosen up and doun.
But wel I wot, expresse withouten lie
God bad us for to wex[4] and multiplie;
That gentil text can I wel understond.
Eke wel I wot, he sayd, that min husbond
Shuld leve fader and moder, and take to me;
But of no noumbre mention made he,

[1] On the reasons for placing this prologue next to the Man of Lawes Tale, see *Tyrwhitt, Discourse* I. xvi., and notes.
[2] Once. [3] Like. [4] Wax, increase.

Of bigamie or of octogamie;
Why shuld men than speke of it vilanie?
Lo here the wise king Dan[1] Salomon,
I trow he hadde wives mo than on,
(As wolde God it leful were to me
To be refreshed hali so oft as he)
Which a gift of God had he for alle his wives?
No man hath swiche, that in this world on live is.
God wot, this noble king, as to my witte,
The firste night had many a mery fitte
With eche of hem, so wel was him on live.
Blessed be God that I have wedded five,
Welcome the sixthe whan that ever he shall.
For sith I wol not kepe me chaste in all,
Whan min husbond is fro the world ygon,
Som cristen man shal wedden me anon.
For than the apostle saith, that I am fre
To wedde, a' goddes halt, wher it liketh me.
He saith, that to be wedded is no sinne;
Better is to be wedded than to brinne.
What rekketh me though folk say vilanie
Of shrewed[2] Lamech, and his bigamie?
I wot wel Abraham was an holy man,
And Jacob eke, as fer as ever I can,
And eche of hem had wives mo than two,
And many another holy man also.
Wher can ye seen in any maner age
That highe God defended[3] mariage
By expresse word? I pray you telleth me,
Or wher commanded he virginitee?
I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
The apostle, whan he spake of maidenhede,
He said, that precept therof had he non:
Men may conseille a woman to ben on,[4]
But conseilling is no commandement;
He put it in our owen jugement.
For hadde God commanded maidenhede,
Than had he dampned wedding out of drede;[5]
And certes, if ther were no sede ysowe,
Virginitee than wherof shuld it growe?
Poule[6] dorste not commanden at the lest
A thing, of which his maister yaf non hest.

[1] Lord. [2] Wicked. [3] Limited.
[4] To be one, *i.e.* to be a nun. [5] Doubt. [6] St. Paul.

The dart is sette up for virginitee,
Catch who so may, who renneth best let see,
But this word is not take of every wight,
But ther[1] as God wol yeve it of his might.
I wot wel that the apostle was a maid,
But natheles, though that he wrote and said,
He wold that every wight were swiche as he,
All n'is but conseil to virginitee.
And for to ben a wif he yaf me leve,
Of indulgence, so n'is it non repreve[2]
To wedden me, if that my make die,
Withoute exception of bigamie;
All were it good no woman for to touche,
(He ment as in his bed or in his couche)
For peril is both fire and tow to assemble;[3]
Ye know what this ensample may resemble.
This is all and som, he held virginitee
More parfit than wedding in freeltee:[4]
(Freeltee clepe[5] I, but if that he and she
Wold lede hir lives all in chastitee)
I graunt it wel, I have of non envie,
Who maidenhed preferre to bigamie;
It liketh hem to be clene in body and gost:
Of min estat I wol not maken bost.
For wel ye know, a lord in his houshold
Ne hath nat every vessell all of gold:
Som ben of tree;[6] and don hir lord service.
God clepeth folk to him in sondry wise,
And everich hath of God a propre gift,
Som this, som that, as that him liketh shift.
Virginitee is gret perfection,
And continence eke with devotion:
But Crist, that of perfection is welle,
Ne bade not every wight he shulde go selle
All that he had, and yeve it to the poure,
And in swiche wise folow him and his lore:[7]
He spake to hem that wold live parfitly,
And, lordings, (by your leve) that am nat I;
I wol bestow the flour of all myn age
In th' actes and the fruit of mariage.

[1] Of those to whom.
[2] Reproach.
[3] *I.e.*, to bring them together.
[4] Frailty.
[5] Say.
[6] Wood.
[7] Commandment.

Tell me also, to what conclusion
Were membres made of generation,
And of so parfit wise a wight ywrought?
Trusteth me wel, they were nat made for nought.
Glose who so wol, and say bothe up and doun,
That they were made for purgatioun
Of urine, and of other thinges smale,
And eke to know a female from a male:
And for non other cause? say ye no?
The experience wot wel it is not so.
So that the clerkes be not with me wroth,
I say this, that they maked ben for both,
This is to sayn, for office, and for ese
Of engendrure, ther we not God displese.
Why shuld men elles in hir bookes sette,
That man shal yelden to his wif hire dette?
Now wherwith shuld he make his payement,
If he ne used his sely[1] instrument?
Than were they made upon a creature
To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is hold,
That hath swiche harneis as I to you told,
To gon and usen hem in engendrure;
Than shuld men take of chastitee no cure.[2]
Crist was a maide, and shapen as a man,
And many a seint, sith that this world began,
Yet lived they ever in parfit chastitee.
I n'ill envie with no virginitee.
Let hem with bred of pured whete be fed,
And let us wives eten barly bred.
And yet with barly bred, Mark tellen can,
Our Lord Jesu refreshed many a man.
In swiche estat as God hath cleped[3] us,
I wol persever, I n'am not precious,[4]
In wifhode wol I use min instrument
As frely as my maker hath it sent.
If I be dangerous God yeve me sorwe,
Min husbond shal it have both even and morwe,
Whan that him list come forth and pay his dette.
An husbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which shal be both my dettour and my thrall,[5]
And have his tribulation withall

[1] Harmless. [2] Care. [3] Called.
[4] Overnice. [5] Slave.

Upon his flesh, while that I am his wif.
I have the power during all my lif
Upon his propre body, and nat he;
Right thus the apostle told it unto me,
And bad our husbonds for to love us wel;
All this sentence me liketh every del.
Up stert the pardoner, and that anon;
Now, dame, quod he, by God and by Seint John,
Ye ben a noble prechour in this cas.
I was about to wed a wif, alas!
What? shuld I bie[1] it on my flesh so dere?
Yet had I lever wed no wif to-yere.
Abide, quod she, my tale is not begonne.
Nay, thou shalt drinken of another tonne
Er that I go, shal savour worse than ale.
And whan that I have told thee forth my tale
Of tribulation in mariage,
Of which I am expert in all min age,
(This is to sayn, myself hath ben the whippe)
Than maiest thou chesen wheder thou wolt sippe
Of thilke tonne, that I shal abroche.
Beware of it, er thou to neigh approche.
For I shal tell ensamples mo than ten:
Who so that n'ill beware by other men
By him shal other men corrected be:
Thise same wordes writeth Ptholomee,
Rede in his Almageste, and take it there.
Dame, I wold pray you, if your will it were,
Sayde this pardoner, as ye began,
Tell forth your tale, and spareth for no man,
And techeth us yonge men of your practike.
Gladly, quod she, sin that it may you like.
But that I pray to all this compagnie,
If that I speke after my fantasie,
As taketh not a greefe of that I say,
For min entente is not but for to play.
Now, sires, than wol I tell you forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinken win or ale
I shal say soth, the husbondes that I had
As three of hem were good, and two were bad.
The three were goode men and riche and olde.
Unethes mighten they the statute holde,

[1] Suffer.

In which that they were bounden unto me.
Ye wot wel what I mene of this parde.[1]
As God me helpe, I laugh whan that I thinke,
How pitously a-night I made hem swinke,
But by my fay, I tolde of it no store:
They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresore,
Me neded not do lenger diligence
To win hir love, or don hem reverence.
They loved me so wel by God above,
That I ne tolde no deintee of[2] hir love.
A wise woman wol besie[3] hire ever in on
To geten hir love, ther as she hath non.
But sith I had hem holly in min hond,
And that they hadde yeven me all hir lond,
What shuld I taken kepe hem for to plese,
But it were for my profit, or min ese?
I set hem so a-werke by my fay,
That many a night they songen wala wa.
The bacon was not fet for hem, I trow,
That som men have in Essex at Donmow.[4]
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That eche of hem ful blisful was and fawe[5]
To bringen me gay thinges fro the feyre.
They were ful glade whan I spake hem fayre,[6]
For God it wot, I chidde hem spitously.
Now herkeneth how I bare me proprely.
Ye wise wives, that can understond,
Thus shul ye speke, and bere hem wrong on hond,
For half so boldely can ther no man
Sweren and lien as a woman can.
(I say not this by wives that ben wise,
But if it be whan they hem misavise.)
A wise wif if that she can[7] hire good,
Shal beren hem on hond the cow is wood,[8]

[1] Par dieux. [2] Set no value upon. [3] Busy.

[4] See Blount's *Ant. Tenures*, p. 162, and P. P. 446. This whimsical institution was not peculiar to Dunmow. There was the same in Bretagne. "A l'Abbaie Sainct Melaine, près Rennes, y a, plus de six cens ans sont, un costé de lard encore tout frais et non corrompu: et neantmoins voué et ordonné aux premiers, qui par an et jour ensemble mariez ont vescu san debat, grondement, et sans s'en repentir."—*Contes d'Eutrap*, t. ii. p. 161.—*Tyrwhitt*. See Brand's *Antiquities*, v. 13, p. 177, *sqq*.

[5] Was fain, glad. [6] Fair. [7] Know.

[8] *Shall make them believe falsely*, the cow is *wood*. The latter words, may either signify that the cow is *mad*, or *made of wood*. Which of the

And taken witnesse of hire owen mayd
Of hir assent: but herkeneth how I sayd.
Sire olde kaynard,[1] is this thin aray?
Why is my neigheboures wif so gay?
She is honoured over al wher she goth,
I sit at home, I have no thrifty cloth.
What dost thou at my neigheboures hous?
Is she so faire? art thou so amorous?
What rownest[2] thou with our maide? *benedicite*,
Sire olde lechour, let thy japes be.
And if I have a gossib, or a frend,
(Withouten gilt) thou chidest as a fend,[3]
If that I walke or play unto his hous.
Thou comest home as dronken as a mous,
And prechest on thy benche, with evil preie:[4]
Thou sayst to me, it is a gret meschiefe
To wed a poure woman, for costage:[5]
And if that she be riche of high parage,[6]
Than sayst thou, that it is a tourmentrie
To soffre hire pride and hire melancolie.
And if that she be faire, thou veray knave,
Thou sayst that every holour[7] wol hire have.
She may no while in chastitee abide,
That is assailled upon every side.
Thou sayst som folk desire us for richesse,
Som for our shape, and som for our fairnesse.
And som, for she can other[8] sing or dance,
And som for gentillesse and daliance,
Som for hire hondes and hire armes smale:
Thus goth all to the devil by thy tale.
Thou sayst, men may not kepe a castel wal,
It may so long assailled be over al.
And if that she be foul, thou sayst, that she
Coveteth every man that she may see;
For as a spaniel, she wol on him lepe,
Til she may finden som man hire to chepe.

two is the preferable interpretation, it will be safest not to determine till we can discover the old story to which this phrase seems to be a proverbial allusion.

[1] Rascal, probably derived from *canis*.
[2] Whisperest.
[3] Fiend.
[4] *I. e.*, May it prove evil to thee!—a sort of parenthetical curse.
[5] Expense.
[6] Kindred.
[7] Debauchee.
[8] Either.

Ne non so grey goos goth ther in the lake,
(As sayst thou) that wol ben withoute a make.
And sayst, it is an hard thing for to welde[1]
A thing, that no man wol, his thankes, helde.
Thus sayst thou, lorel,[2] whan thou gost to bed,
And that no wise man nedeth for to wed,
Ne no man that entendeth unto heven.
With wilde thonder dint[3] and firy leven
Mote thy welked[4] nekke be to-broke.
Thou sayst, that dropping houses, and eke smoke,
And chiding wives maken men to flee
Out of hir owen hous; a, *benedicite*,
What aileth swiche an old man for to chide?
Thou sayst, we wives wol our vices hide,
Til we be fast, and than we wol hem shewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe.
Thou sayst, that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,
They ben assaied at diverse stoundes,[5]
Basines, lavoures,[6] cr that men hem bie,
Spones, stooles, and all swiche husbondrie,
And so ben pottes, clothes, and aray,
But folk of wives maken non assay,
Til they ben wedded, olde dotard shrewe!
And than, sayst thou, we wol our vices shewe.
Thou sayst also, that it displeseth me,
But if that thou wolt preisen my beautee,
And but thou pore alway upon my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a feste on thilke day
That I was borne, and make me fresh and gay;
And but thou do to my norice[7] honour,
And to my chamberere[8] within my bour,[9]
And to my faders folk, and myn allies;
Thus sayst thou, olde barel ful of lies.
And yet also of our prentis Jankin,
For his crispe here, shining as gold so fin,
And for he squiereth me both up and doun,
Yet hast thou caught a false suspection:
I wol him nat, though thou were ded to-morwe.
But tell me this, why hidest thou with sorwe

[1] Govern.
[2] Scamp, good-for-nought.
[3] Stroke.
[4] Rotten.
[5] Times, seasons.
[6] Lavers.
[7] Nurse.
[8] Cham ermaid.
[9] House.

The keies of thy chest away fro me?
It is my good[1] as wel as thin parde.[2]
What, wenest thou make an idiot of our dame?
Now by that Lord that cleped is Seint Jame,
Thou shalt nat bothe, though that thou were wood,[3]
Be maister of my body and of my good,
That on thou shalt forgo maugre[4] thin eyen.
What helpeth of me to enquere and spien?
I trow thou woldest locke me in thy cheste.
Thou shuldest say, Fayr wif, go wher thee leste;[5]
Take your disport; I wol not leve no tales;
I know you for a trewe wif, dame Ales.
We love no man, that taketh kepe[6] or charge
Wher that we gon, we wol be at our large.
Of alle men yblessed mote he be
The wise astrologien Dan[7] Ptholomee,
That sayth this proverbe in his Almageste:
Of alle men his wisdom is higheste,
That rekketh not who hath the world in hond.
By this proverbe thou shalt wel understond,
Have thou ynough, what thar thee rekke or care
How merily that other folkes fare?
For certes, olde dotard, by your leve,
Ye shullen have queint right ynough at eve.
He is to gret a nigard that wol werne[8]
A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
He shal have never the lesse light parde.
Have thou ynough, thee thar non plainen thee.
Thou sayst also, if that we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastitee.
And yet, with sorwe, thou enforcest thee,
And sayst thise wordes in the apostles name:
In habit made with chastitee and shame
Ye women shul appareile you, (quod he);
And nat in tressed here,[9] and gay perrie,[10]

[1] Goods, property. [2] Par dieux.
[3] Mad. [4] Despite. [5] It pleaseth thee.
[6] Care. [7] Lord.
[8] Warne here seems to mean "refuse." This sense is borne out, I think, by a passage of Ennius in Cicero *de Off.* l. 1.:
"Homo, qui erranti comiter monstrat viam,
Quasi de suo lumine lumen accendat, facit.
Nihilominus ut ipsi luceat, quivis illi accenderit."
which passage Chaucer appears to have had in mind.—Ed.
[9] Have gathered into tresses. [10] Jewellery.

As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche
I wol not work as mochel as a gnat.
Thou sayst also, I walke out like a cat;
For who so wolde senge the cattes skin,
Than wol the cat wel dwellen in hire in;
And if the cattes skin be sleke and gay,
She wol nat dwellen in hous half a day,
But forth she wol, or any day be dawed,
To shew hire skin, and gon a caterwawed.[1]
This is to say, if I be gay, sire shrewe,
I wol renne out, my borel[2] for to shewe.
Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spien?
Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen
To be my wardecorps,[3] as he can best,
In faith he shal not kepe me but me lest:[4]
Yet coude I make his berd, so mote I the.[5]
Thou sayest eke, that ther ben thinges three,
Which thinges gretly troublen all this erthe,
And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe:[6]
O lefe sire shrewe, Jesu short thy lif.
Yet prechest thou, and sayst, an hateful wif
Yrekened is for on of thise meschances.
Be ther non other maner resemblances
That ye may liken your parables to,
But if a sely[7] wif be on of tho?
Thou likenest eke womans love to helle,
To barrein lond, ther water may not dwelle.
Thou likenest it also to wilde fire;
The more it brenneth, the more it hath desire
To consume every thing, that brent wol be.
Thou sayest, right as wormes shende[8] a tre,
Right so a wif destroieth hire husbond;
This knowen they that ben to wives bond.
Lordings, right thus, as ye han understond,
Bare I stifly min old husbondes on hond,
That thus they saiden in hir dronkennesse;
And all was false, but as I toke witnesse
On Jankin, and upon my nece also.
O Lord, the peine I did hem, and the wo,

[1] A caterwauling.
[2] *Borel* here means clothing in general; elsewhere it is used for a coarse brown cloth.
[3] Body-guard.
[4] Except I be willing.
[5] So may I thrive.
[6] Fourth.
[7] Silly.
[8] Destroy.

Ful gilteles, by Goddes swete pine ;[1]
For as an hors, I coude bite and whine;
I coude plain, and I was in the gilt,
Or elles oftentime I had ben spilt.
Who so first cometh to the mill, first grint;
I plained first, so was our werre ystint.[2]
They were ful glad to excusen hem ful blive[3]
Of thing, the which they never agilt hir live[4]
Of wenches wold I beren hem on hond,[5]
Whan that for sike[6] unnethes might they stond,
Yet tikeled I his herte for that he
Wend that I had of him so gret chiertee:[7]
I swore that all my walking out by night
Was for to espien wenches that he dight:[8]
Under that colour had I many a mirth.
For all swiche wit is yeven us in our birth;
Deceite, weping, spinning, God hath yeven
To women kindly, while that they may liven.
And thus of o thing I may avaunten me,
At th'ende I had the beter in eche degree,
By sleight or force, or by som maner thing,
As by continual murmur or grutching,
Namely a-bed, ther hadden they meschance,
Ther wold I chide, and don hem no plesance:
I wold no lenger in the bed abide,
If that I felt his arme over my side,
Til he had made his raunson unto me,
Than wold I soffre him do his nicetee.
And therfore every man this tale I tell,
Winne who so may, for all is for to sell:
With empty hond men may no haukes lure,
For winning wold I all his lust endure,
And maken me a feined appetit,
And yet in bacon had I never delit:
That maked me that ever I wold hem chide.
For though the pope had sitten hem beside,
I wold not spare hem at hir owen bord,
For by my trouthe I quitte hem word for word.
As helpe me veray God omnipotent,
Tho I right now shuld make my testament,

[1] Sufferings. [2] Battle stopped. [3] Readily.
[4] Sinned, offended. [5] Blame them falsely.
[6] Sickness. [7] Affection. [8] Dressed.

I ne owe hem not a word, that it n'is quit,
I brought it so abouten by my wit,
That they must yeve it up, as for the best,
Or elles had we never ben in rest.
For though he loked as a wood leon,
Yet shuld he faille of his conclusion.
Than wold I say, now goode lefe, take kepe.
How mekely loketh Wilkin oure shepe!
Come ner my spouse, and let me ba[1] thy cheke.
Ye shulden be al patient and meke,
And han a swete spiced conscience,
Sith ye so preche of Jobes patience.
Suffreth alway, sin ye so wel can preche,
And but ye do, certain we shal you teche
That it is faire to han a wif in pees.
On of us two moste bowen doutelees:
And, sith a man is more resonable
Than woman is, ye mosten ben suffrable.
What aileth you to grutchen thus and grone?
Is it for ye wold have my queint alone?
Why take it all: lo, have it every del.
Peter, I shrew you but ye love it wel.
For if I wolde sell my *belle chose*,
I coude walke as freshe as is a rose,
But I wol kepe it for your owen toth.
Ye be to blame, by God, I say you soth.
Swiche maner wordes hadden we on hond.
Now wol I speken of my fourthe husbond.
My fourthe husbonde was a revellour,
This is to sayn, he had a paramour,
And I was yonge and ful of ragerie,[2]
Stibborne and strong, and joly as a pie.
Tho coude I dancen to an harpe smale,
And sing ywis as any nightingale,
Whan I had dronke a draught of swete wine.
Metellius,[3] the foule cherle, the swine,
That with a staf beraft his wif hire lif
For she drank wine, though I had ben his wif,
Ne shuld he not have daunted me fro drinke:
And after wine of Venus most I thinke.
For al so siker[4] as cold engendreth hayl,
A likerous mouth most han a likerous tayl.

[1] Kiss.
[2] Wantonness.
[3] See Valer. Maximus, vi. 3.
[4] Sure, certain.

In woman vinolent[1] is no defence,
This knowen lechours by experience.
But, lord Crist, whan that it remembreth me
Upon my youth, and on my jolitee,
It tikleth me about myn herte-rote.
Unto this day it doth myn herte bote,[2]
That I have had my world as in my time.
But age, alas! that all wol envenime,[3]
Hath me beraft my beautee and my pith:[4]
Let go, farewel, the devil go therwith.
The flour is gon, there n'is no more to tell,
The bren, as I best may, now moste I sell.
But yet to be right mery wol I fond.
Now forth to tellen of my fourthe husbond.
I say, I had in herte gret despit,
That he of any other had delit;
But he was quit by God and by Seint Joce:[5]
I made him of the same wood a croce,
Not of my body in no foule manere,
But certainly I made folk swiche chere.
That in his owen grese I made him frie
For anger, and for veray jalousie.
By God, in erth I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie.
For, God it wote, he sate ful oft and songe,
Whan that his sho ful bitterly him wronge.
Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste
In many a wise how sore that I him twiste.
He died whan I come fro Jerusalem,
And lith ygrave under the rode-beem:[6]
All is his tombe not so curious
As was the sepulcre of him Darius,
Which that Appelles wrought so sotelly.
It is but wast to bury hem preciously.
Let him farewel, God give his soule rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.
Now of my fifthe husbonde wol I telle:
God let his soule never come in helle.
And yet was he to me the moste shrew,
That fele I on my ribbes all by rew,

[1] Full of wine.
[2] Benefit; delight.
[3] Embitter.
[4] Strength.
[5] Jodocus, a saint of Ponthieu.
[6] Cross.

And ever shal, unto min ending day.
But in our bed he was so fresh and gay,
And therwithal he coude so wel me glose,
Whan that he wolde han my *belle chose*,
That, though he had me bet on every bon,
He coude win agen my love anon.
I trow, I love him the bet, for he
Was of his love so dangerous to me.
We wimmen han, if that I shal not lie,
In this matere a queinte fantasie.
Waite,[1] what thing we may nat lightly have,
Therafter wol we cry all day and crave.
Forbede us thing, and that desiren we;
Prese on us fast, and thanne wol we flee.
With danger uttren we all our chaffare;
Gret prees at market maketh dere ware,
And to gret chepe is holden at litel prise;
This knoweth every woman that is wise.
My fifthe husbonde, God his soule blesse,
Which that I toke for love and no richesse,
He somtime was a clerk of Oxenforde,
And had left scole, and went at home at borde
With my gossib, dwelling in oure toun:
God have hire soule, hire name was Alisoun.
She knew my herte and all my privetee,
Bet than our parish preest, so mote I the.[2]
To hire bewried[3] I my conseil all;
For had my husbond pissed on a wall,
Or don a thing that shuld have cost his lif,
To hire, and to another worthy wif,
And to my nece, which that I loved wel,
I wold have told his conseil every del.
And so I did ful often, God it wote,
That made his face ful often red and hote
For veray shame, and blamed himself, for he
Had told to me so gret a privetee.
And so befell that ones in a Lent,
(So often times I to my gossib went,
For ever yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke in March, April, and May
From hous to hous, to heren sondry tales)
That Jankin clerk, and my gossib dame Ales,

[1] Watch after. [2] So may I thrive. [3] Disclosed.

And I myself, into the feldes went.
Myn husbond was at London all that Lent;
I had the better leiser for to pleie,
And for to see, and eke for to be seie
Of lusty folk; what wist I wher my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore made I my visitations
To vigilies, and to processions,
To prechings eke, and to thise pilgrimages,
To playes of miracles, and mariages,
And wered upon my gay skarlet gites.[1]
Thise wormes, ne thise mothes, ne thise mites
Upon my paraille frett hem never a del,
And wost thou why? for they were used wel.
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me:
I say, that in the feldes walked we,
Till trewely we had swiche daliance
This clerk and I, that of my purveance
I spake to him, and said him how that he,
If I were widewe, shulde wedden me.
For certainly, I say for no bobance,[2]
Yet was I never without purveance
Of mariage, ne of other thinges eke;
I hold a mouses wit not worth a leke,
That hath but on hole for to sterten to,
And if that faille, than is all ydo.
I bare him on hond[3] he had enchanted me;
(My dame taughte me that subtiltee)
And eke I sayd, I mette[4] of him all night,
He wold han slain me, as I lay upright,
And all my bed was full of veray blood;
But yet I hope that ye shuln do me good:
For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught.
And al was false, I dremed of him right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames lore,[5]
As wel of that as of other thinges more.
But now, sire, let me see, what shall I sain?
A ha, by God I have my tale again.
Whan that my fourthe husbonde was on bere,
I wept algate[6] and made a sory chere,
As wives moten, for it is the usage;
And with my coverchefe covered my visage;

[1] Gowns. [2] Boasting. [3] I made him believe.
[4] Dreamed. [5] Counsel, opinion. [6] Always.

But, for that I was purveyed of a make,[1]
I wept but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn husbond born a-morwe
With neigheboures that for him maden sorwe,
And Jankin oure clerk was on of tho:
As helpe me God, whan that I saw him go
After the bere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet, so clene and faire,
That all my herte I yave unto his hold.
He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was fourty, if I shal say soth,
But yet I had alway a coltes toth.
Gat-tothed[2] I was, and that became me wele,
I had the print of Seinte Venus sele.
As helpe me God, I was a lusty on,
And faire, and riche, and yonge, and wel begon:
And trewely, as min husbondes tolden me,
I had the beste queint that mighte be.
For certes I am all venerian
In feling, and my herte is marcian:
Venus me yave my lust and likerousnesse,
And Mars yave me my sturdy hardinesse.
Min ascendent was Taure, and Mars therinne:
Alas, alas, that ever love was sinne!
I folwed ay min inclination
By vertue of my constellation:
That made me that I coude nat withdraw
My chambre of Venus from a good felaw.
Yet have I Martes merke upon my face,
And also in another privee place.
For God so wisly be my salvation,
I loved never by no discretion,
But ever folwed min appetit,
All were he shorte, longe, blake, or white,
I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
How poure he was, ne eke of what degree.
What shuld I saye? but at the monthes ende
This joly clerk Jankin, that was so hende,[3]
Hath wedded me with gret solempnitee.
And to him yave I all the lond and fee,
That ever was me yeven therbefore:
But afterward repented me full sore.

[1] Provided with a mate. [2] Cf. vs. 470. [3] Courteous.

He n'olde[1] suffre nothing of my list.
By God he smote me ones with his fist,
For that I rent out of his boke a lefe,
That of the stroke myn ere wex al defe,
Stibborne I was, as is a leonesse,
And of my tonge a veray jangleresse,
And walke I wold, as I had don beforn,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn:
For which he oftentimes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romaine gestes teche.
How he Sulpitius Gallus left his wif,
And hire forsoke for terme of all his lif,
Not but for open-heded he hire say[2]
Loking out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romaine[3] told he me by name,
That, for his wif was at a sommer game
Without his weting, he forsoke hire eke.
And than wold he upon his Bible seke
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Wher he commandeth, and forbedeth faste,
Man shal not suffer his wif go roule[4] aboute.
Than wold he say right thus withouten doute:
Who so that bildeth his hous all of salwes,[5]
And pricketh his blind hors over the falwes,[6]
And suffereth his wif to go seken halwes,[7]
Is worthy to be honged on the galwes.
But all for nought, I sette not an hawe[8]
Of his proverbes, ne of his old sawe;
Ne I wold not of him corrected be.
I hate hem that my vices tellen me,
And so do mo of us (God wote) than I.
This made him wood[9] with me all utterly;
I n' olde not forbere him in no cas.
Now wol I say you soth by Seint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a lefe,
For which he smote me, so that I was defe.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his disport he wolde it rede alway,

[1] Would not. [2] See Valer. Max. vi. 3.
[3] Sempronius Sophus, from the same authority. [4] Ramble.
[5] Willows. See Richardson, v. "sallow."
[6] Fallows. [7] To run after.
[8] A hawthorn berry. [9] Mad.

He cleped it Valerie,[1] and Theophrast,[2]
And with that book he lough[3] alway ful fast.
And eke ther was a clerk somtime at Rome,
A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,
That made a book again Jovinian,
Which book was ther, and eke Tertullian,
Crisippus, Trotula,[4] and Helowis,[5]
That was abbesse not fer fro Paris;
And eke the paraboles of Salomon,
Ovides art, and bourdes[6] many on;
And alle thise were bonden in o volume.
And every night and day was his custume
(Whan he had leiser and vacation
From other worldly occupation)
To reden in this book of wikked wives.
He knew of hem mo legendes and mo lives,
Than ben of goode wives in the Bible.
For trusteth wel, it is an impossible,
That any clerk wol speken good of wives,
(But if it be of holy seintes lives)
Ne of non other woman never the mo.
Who peinted the leon, telleth me, who?
By God, if wimmen hadden written stories,
As clerkes han, within hir oratories,
They wold have writ of men more wikkednesse,
Than all the merke of Adam[7] may redresse.
The children of Mercury and of Venus
Ben in hir werking ful contrarious.
Mercury loveth wisdom and science,
And Venus loveth riot and dispence.
And for hir divers disposition,
Eche falleth in others exaltation.[8]
As thus, God wote, Mercury is desolat
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,
And Venus falleth wher Mercury is reised.
Therfore no woman of no clerk is preised.
The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkes not worth his old sho,

[1] Valerius *de non ducendâ uxore*, sometimes printed with the works of St. Jerome.
[2] Theophrastus *de nuptiis*, quoted by Hieronymus *contra Jovinianum*.
[3] Laughed. [4] A medical writer. [5] The Epistles of Heloise.
[6] Jests. [7] All the images of Adam, *i. e.*, all mankind.
[8] The exaltation of a planet anciently meant that it was in that sign of the Zodiac, where it exerted its greatest influence.

Than siteth he doun, and writeth in his dotage,
That wimmen cannot kepe hir mariage.
But now to purpos, why I tolde thee,
That I was beten for a book parde.
Upon a night Jankin, that was our sire,
Red on his book, as he sate by the fire,
Of Eva first, that for hire wikkednesse
Was all mankinde brought to wretchednesse,
For which that Jesu Crist himself was slain,
That bought us with his herte-blood again.
Lo here expresse of wimmen may ye find,
That woman was the losse of all mankind.
Tho redde he me how Sampson lost his heres
Sleping, his lemman kitte[1] hem with hire sheres,
Thurgh whiche treson lost he both his eyen.
Tho redde he me, if that I shal not lien,
Of Hercules, and of his Deianire,
That caused him to set himself a-fire.
Nothing forgat he the care and the wo,
That Socrates had with his wives two;
How Xantippa cast pisse upon his hed.
This sely man sat still, as he were ded,
He wiped his hed, no more dorst he sain,
But, er the thonder stint[2] ther cometh rain.
Of Pasiphae, that was the quene of Crete,
For shrewednesse him thought the tale swete.
Fie, speke no more (it is a grisely thing)
Of hire horrible lust and hire liking.
Of Clitemnestra for hire lecherie
That falsely made hire husbond for to die,
He redde it with ful good devotion.
He told me eke, for what occasion
Amphiorax[3] at Thebes lost his lif:
My husbond had a legend of his wif
Eriphile, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told,
Wher that hire husbond hidde him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lima told he me, and of Lucie:[4]
They bothe made hir husbondes for to die,

[1] Cut. [2] Cease. [3] Amphiaraus.
[4] In the *Epistola Valerii*, &c. MS. *Reg.* 12. D. iii. the story is told thus. *Luna* virum suum interfecit quem nimis odivit: *Lucilia* suum quem

That on for love, that other was for hate.
Lima hire husbond on an even late
Enpoysoneth hath, for that she was his fo:
Lucia likerous loved hire husbond so,
That for he shuld alway upon hire thinke.
She yave him swiche a maner love-drinke,
That he was ded er it were by the morwe:
And thus algates[1] husbondes hadden sorwe.
Than told he me, how on Latumeus[2]
Complained to his felaw Arius,
That in his gardin growed swiche a tree,
On which he said how that his wives three
Honged hemself for hertes despitous.
O leve brother, quod this Arius,
Yeve me a plant of thilke blessed tree,
And in my gardin planted shal it be.
Of later date of wives hath he redde,
That som han slain hir husbonds in hir bedde,
And let hir lechour dight hem all the night,
While that the corps lay in the flore upright:
And som han driven nailes in hir brain,
While that they slepe, and thus they han hem slain:
Som han hem yeven poyson in hir drink:
He spake more harm than herte may bethinke.
And therwithall he knew of mo proverbes,
Than in this world their growen gras or herbes.
Bet is[3] (quod he) thin habitation
Be with a leon, or a foule dragon,
Than with a woman using for to chide.
Bet is (quod he) high in the roof abide,
Than with an angry woman doun in the hous,
They ben so wikked and contrarious:
They haten, that hir husbonds loven ay.
He sayd, a woman cast hire shame away,[4]
Whan she cast of hire smock; and forthermo,
A faire woman, but she be chast also,
Is like a gold ring in a sowes nose.
Who coude wene, or who coude suppose

nimis amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconita: hæc decepta furorem propinavit pro amoris poculo. *Lima* and *Lucia* in many MSS. are only distinguishable by a small stroke over the *i*, which may be easily overlooked where it is, and supposed where it is not.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Always.
[2] These names are probably corrupt.
[3] Better it is.
[4] A sentiment of Herodotus, lib. 1, *sub fin.*

The wo that in min herte was, and the pine?
And whan I saw he n'olde never fine[1]
To reden on this cursed book all night,
Al sodenly three leves have I plight[2]
Out of his book, right as he redde, and eke
I with my fist so toke him on the cheke,
That in oure fire he fell bakward adoun.
And he up sterte, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fist he smote me on the heed,
That in the flore I lay as I were ded.
And whan he saw how stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wold have fled away,
Til at the last out of my swough[3] I brayde.[4]
O, hast thou slain me, false theef? I sayde,
And for my lond thus hast thou mordred me?
Er I be ded, yet wol I kissen thee.
And nere he came, and kneled faire adoun,
And sayde; dere suster Alisoun,
As helpe me God I shal thee never smite:
That I have don it is thyself to wite,
Forveve it me, and that I thee beseke.
And yet eftsones I hitte him on the cheke,
And sayde; theef, thus much am I awreke.[5]
Now wol I die, I may no longer speke.
But at the last, with mochel care and wo
We fell accorded by ourselven two:
He yaf me all the bridel in min hond
To han the governance of hous and lond,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
And made him brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan that I had getten unto me
By maistrie all the soverainetee,
And that he sayd, min owen trewe wif,
Do as thee list, the terme of all thy lif,
Kepe thin honour, and kepe eke min estat;
After that day we never had debat.
God helpe me so, I was to him as kinde,
As any wif fro Denmark unto Inde,
And al so trewe, and so was he to me:
I pray to God that sit in majestee
So blisse his soule, for his mercy dere.
Now wol I say my tale if ye wol here.

[1] Cease. [2] Plucked. [3] Swoon.
[4] Awaked. [5] Revenged.

The frere[1] lough whan he had herd all this:
Now dame, quod he, so have I joye and blis,
This is a long preamble of a tale.
And whan the Sompnour herd the frere gale,[2]
Lo (quod this Sompnour) Goddes armes two,
A frere wol entermete[3] him evermo:
Lo, goode men, a flie and eke a frere
Wol fall in every dish and eke matere.
What spekest thou of preambulatioun?
What? amble or trot; or pees, or go sit doun:
Thou lettest our disport in this matere.
Ye, wolt thou so, Sire Sompnour? quod the frere;
Now by my faith I shal, er that I go,
Tell of a Sompnour swiche a tale or two,
That all the folk shal laughen in this place.
Now elles, frere, I wol beshrewe thy face,
(Quod this Sompnour) and I beshrewe me,
But if I telle tales two or three
Of freres, or I come to Sidenborne,
That I shal make thin herte for to morne:
For wel I wot thy patience is gon.
Our hoste cried; pees, and that anon:
And sayde; let the woman tell hire tale.
Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best.
Al redy, sire, quod she, right as you lest,
If I have licence of this worthy frere.
Yes, dame, quod he, tell forth, and I wol here.

The Wif of Bathes Tale.

In olde dayes of the king Artour,[4]
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie;
The Elf-quene, with hire joly compagnie,
Danced ful oft in many a grene mede
This was the old opinion as I rede;

[1] Brother. [2] Sing, *i. e.*, laugh, chuckle.—See *Tyrwhitt*.
[3] Interpose.
[4] I hope that Chaucer, by placing his Elf-quene *in the dayes of King Artour*, did not mean to intimate that the two monarchies were equally

The Wif of Bathes Tale. P

I speke of many hundred yeres ago;
But now can no man see non elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of limitoures[1] and other holy freres,
That serchen every land and every streme,
As thikke as motes[2] in the sonne-beme,
Blissing[3] halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,[4]
Citees and burghes, castles highe and toures,
Thropes[5] and bernes,[6] shepenes and dairies,
This maketh that ther ben no faeries:
For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
Ther walketh now the limitour himself,
In undermeles[7] and in morweninges,[8]
And sayth his Matines and his holy thinges,
As he goth in his limitatioun.[9]
Women may now go safely up and doun,
In every bush, and under every tree,
Ther is non other incubus[10] but he,
And he ne will don hem no dishonour.
And so befell it, that this king Artour
Had in his hous a lusty bacheler,
That on a day came riding fro river:
And happed, that, alone as she was borne,
He saw a maiden walking him beforne,
Of which maid he anon, maugre hire hed,
By veray force beraft hire maidenhed:
For which oppression was swiche clamour,
And swiche pursuite unto the king Artour,
That damned was this knight for to be ded
By cours of lawe, and shuld have lost his hed,

fabulous and visionary. Master *Wace* has judged more candidly of the exploits of our British hero.

Ne tut mensonge, ne tut veir;
Ne tut folie, ne tut saveir.
Tant unt li conteor conté,
E li fableor tant fablé,
Pur les contes enbelecer,
Ke tut unt fait fable sembler.

Le Brut. MS. *Cotton.* Vitell. A. 7.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Cf. vs. 209, 253.
[2] Atoms, spots, what Lucretius calls "micæ," loose particles floating in the air
[3] Blessing.
[4] Houses.
[5] For "thorpes," *i. e.*, villages.
[6] Barns.
[7] Either "dinner-time," or the time after dinner.
[8] Mornings.
[9] *I. e.*, on his duty as a begging friar.
[10] Night-mare.

(Paraventure swiche was the statute tho,)
But that the quene and other ladies mo
So longe praieden the king of grace,
Til he his lif him granted in the place,
And yaf him to the quene, all at hire will
To chese whether she wold him save or spill.
The quene thanketh the king with all hire might;
And after this thus spake she to the knight,
Whan that she saw hire time upon a day.
Thou standest yet (quod she) in swiche array,
That of thy lif yet hast thou no seuretee;
I grant thee lif, if thou canst tellen me,
What thing is it that women most desiren:
Beware, and kepe thy nekke-bone from yren.[1]
And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon
A twelvemonth and a day, to seke and lere[2]
An answer suffisant in this matere.
And seuretee wol I have, or that thou pace,[3]
Thy body for to yelden in this place.
Wo was the knight, and sorwefully he siketh;
But what? he may not don all as him liketh.
And at the last he chese him for to wende,
And come agen right at the yeres ende
With swiche answer, as God wold him purvay:
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his way.
He seketh every hous and every place,
Wher as he hopeth for to finden grace,
To lernen what thing women loven moste:
But he ne coude ariven in no coste,
Wher as he mighte find in this matere
Two creatures according in fere.[4]
Som saiden, women loven best richesse,
Som saiden honour, som saiden jolinesse,
Som riche array, som saiden lust a-bedde,
And oft time to be widewe and to be wedde.
Some saiden, that we ben in herte most esed
Whan that we ben yflatered and ypreised.
He goth ful nigh the sothe, I wol not lie;
A man shal winne us best with flaterie;
And with attendance, and with besinesse
Ben we ylimed[5] bothe more and lesse.

[1] Iron, *i. e.*, the sword.
[2] Learn.
[3] Before thou go.
[4] Together.
[5] Limed, caught.

And som men saiden, that we loven best
For to be free, and do right as us lest,
And that no man repreve us of our vice,
But say that we ben wise, and nothing nice.
For trewely ther n'is non of us all,
If any wight wol claw us on the gall,
That we n'ill kike, for that he saith us soth:
Assay, and he shal find it, that so doth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We wol be holden wise and clene of sinne.
And som saiden, that gret delit han we
For to be holden stable and eke secre,
And in o purpos stedfastly to dwell,
And not bewreyen[1] thing that men us tell.
But that tale is not worth a rake-stele.[2]
Parde we women connen nothing hele,
Witnesse on Mida; wol ye here the tale?
Ovide, amonges other thinges smale,
Said, Mida had under his longe heres
Growing upon his hed two asses eres;
The whiche vice he hid, as he beste might,
Ful subtilly from every mannes sight,
That, save his wif, ther wist of it no mo;
He loved hire most, and trusted hire also;
He praied hire, that to no creature
She n'olde tellen of his disfigure.
She swore him, nay, for all the world to winne,
She n'olde do that vilanie, ne sinne,
To make hire husbond han so foule a name:
She n'olde not tell it for hire owen shame.
But natheles hire thoughte that she dide,
That she so longe shuld a conseil hide;
Hire thought it swal[3] so sore aboute hire herte,
That nedely som word hire must asterte;
And sith she dorst nat telle it to no man,
Doun to a mareis[4] faste by she ran,
Til she came ther, hire herte was a-fire:
And as a bitore[5] bumbleth[6] in the mire,
She laid hire mouth unto the water doun.
Bewrey me not, thou water, with thy soun,
Quod she, to thee I tell it, and no mo,
Min husbond hath long asses eres two.

[1] Betray. [2] Rake-handle. [3] Swell. [4] Marsh.
[5] Bittern. [6] Usually, to make a humming noise.

Now is min herte all hole, now is it out,
I might no lenger kepe it out of dout,
Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
Yet out it moste, we can no conseil hide.
The remenant of the tale, if ye wol here,
Redeth[1] Ovide, and ther ye may it lere.
This knight, of which my tale is specially,
Whan that he saw he might not come therby,
(This is to sayn, what women loven most)
Within his brest ful sorweful was his gost.
But home he goth, he mighte not sojourne,
The day was come, that homward must he turne
And in his way, it happed him to ride
In all his care, under a forest side,
Wheras he saw upon a dance go
Of ladies foure and twenty, and yet mo.
Toward this ilke dance he drow[2] ful yerne,[3]
In hope that he som wisdom shulde lerne;
But certainly, er he came fully there,
Vanished was this dance, he n'iste not wher;
No creature saw he that bare lif,
Save on the grene he saw sitting a wif,
A fouler wight ther may no man devise.
Againe this knight this olde wif gan arise,
And said; sire knight, here forth ne lith[4] no way.
Tell me what that ye seken by your fay.
Paraventure it may the better be:
Thise olde folk con mochel thing,[5] quod she.
My leve mother, quod this knight, certain,
I n'am but ded, but if that I can sain,
What thing it is that women most desire:
Coude ye me wisse, I wold quite wel your hire.
Plight me thy trouthe here in myn hond, quod she,
The nexte thing that I requere of thee
Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,
And I wol tell it you or it be night.
Have here my trouthe, quod the knight, I graunte.
Thanne, quod she, I dare me wel avaunte,
Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stond therby,
Upon my lif the quene wol say as I:
Let see, which is the proudest of hem alle,
That wereth on a kerchef or a calle,

[1] Telleth. [2] Drew, came. [3] Eagerly.
[4] There lies. [5] Know a good deal.

That dare sayn nay of that I shal you teche.
Let us go forth withouten lenger speche.
Tho rowned she a pistel[1] in his ere,
And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
Whan they ben comen to the court, this knight
Said, he had hold his day, as he had hight,
And redy was his answere, as he saide.
Ful many a noble wif, and many a maide,
And many a widewe, for that they ben wise,
(The quene hireself sitting as a justice)
Assembled ben, his answer for to here,
And afterward this knight was bode[2] appere.
To every wight commanded was silence,
And that the knight shuld tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women loven best.
This knight ne stood not still, as doth a best,
But to this question anon answerd
With manly vois, that all the court it herd.
My liege lady, generally, quod he,
Women desiren to han soverainetee,
As well over hir husbond as hir love,
And for to ben in maistrie him above.
This is your most desire, though ye me kille,
Doth as you list, I am here at your wille.
In all the court ne was ther wif ne maide,
Ne widewe, that contraried that he saide,
But said, he was worthy to han his lif.
And with that word up stert this olde wif,
Which that the knight saw sitting on the grene.
Mercy, quod she, my soverain lady quene,
Er that your court depart, as doth me right.
I taughte this answer unto this knight,
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thing I wold of him requere,
He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court than pray I thee, sire knight,
Quod she, that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou wost,[3] that I have kept thy lif:
If I say false, say nay upon thy fay.
This knight answered, alas and wala wa!
I wot right wel that swiche was my behest.
For Goddes love as chese[4] a new request:

[1] A short lesson.
[2] Bidden.
[3] Knowest.
[4] Pray choose.

Take all my good, and let my body go.
Nay than, quod she, I shrewe us bothe two.
For though that I be olde, foule, and pore,
I n'olde for all the metal ne the ore,
That under erthe is grave,[1] or lith[2] above,
But if thy wif I were and eke thy love.
My love? quod he, nay, my dampnation.
Alas! that any of my nation
Shuld ever so foule disparaged be.
But all for nought; the end is this, that he
Constrained was, he nedes must hire wed,
And taketh this olde wif, and goth to bed.
Now wolden som men sayn paraventure,
That for my negligence I do no cure
To tellen you the joye and all the array,
That at the feste was that ilke day.
To which thing shortly answeren I shal:
I say ther was no joye ne feste at al,
Ther n'as but hevinesse and mochel sorwe:
For prively he wedded hire on the morwe,
And all day after hid him as an oule,
So wo was him, his wif loked so foule.
Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wif a-bed ybrought,
He walweth, and he turneth to and fro.
This olde wif lay smiling evermo,
And said: O dere husbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knight thus with his wif as ye?
Is this the lawe of king Artoures hous?
Is every knight of his thus dangerous?[3]
I am your owen love, and eke your wif,
I am she, which that saved hath your lif,
And certes yet did I you never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firste night?
Ye faren like a man had lost his wit.
What is my gilt? for Goddes love tell it,
And it shal ben amended, if I may.
Amended? quod this knight, alas! nay, nay,
It wol not ben amended never mo;
Thou art so lothly, and so olde also,
And therto comen of so low a kind,
That litel wonder is though I walwe and wind;[4]

[1] Buried. [2] Lieth.
[3] Difficult, sparing of himself. [4] Turn about.

So wolde God, min herte wolde brest.
Is this, quod she, the cause of your unrest?
Ye certainly, quod he, no wonder is.
Now sire, quod she, I coude amend all this,
If that me list, er it were dayes three,
So wel ye mighten bere you unto me.
But for ye speken of swiche gentillesse,
As is descended out of old richesse,
That therfore shullen ye be gentilmen:
Swiche arrogance n'is not worth an hen.
Loke who that is most vertuous alway,
Prive and apert,[1] and most entendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And take him for the gretest gentilman.
Crist wol we claime of him our gentillesse,
Not of our elders for hir old richesse.
For though they yeve us all hir heritage,
For which we claime to ben of high parage,[2]
Yet may they not bequethen, for no thing,
To non of us, hir vertuous living,
That made hem gentilmen called to be,
And bade us folwen hem in swiche degree.
Wel can the wise poet of Florence,
That highte Dant, speken of this sentence:
Lo, in swiche maner rime is Dantes tale.[3]
Ful selde[4] up riseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse
Wol that we claime of him our gentillesse:
For of our elders may we nothing claime
But temporel thing, that man may hurt and maime.
Eke every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentillesse were planted naturelly
Unto a certain linage doun the line,
Prive and apert, than wold they never fine[5]
To don of gentillesse the faire office,
They mighten do no vilanie or vice.
Take fire and bere it into the derkest hous
Betwix this and the mount of Caucasus,
And let men shette the dores, and go thenne,
Yet wol the fire as faire lie and brenne
As twenty thousand men might it behol
His office naturel ay wol it hold,

[1] In private and public. [2] Lineage.
[3] See *Purgat.* vii. 121. [4] Seldom. [5] Cease.

Up peril of my lif, til that it die.
Here may ye see wel, how that genterie[1]
Is not annexed to possession,
Sith folk ne don hir operation
Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in his kind.
For God it wot, men moun ful often find
A lordes sone do shame and vilanie.
And he that wol han pris of his genterie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his elders noble and vertuous,
And n'ill himselven do no gentil dedes,
Ne folwe his gentil auncestrie, that ded is,
He n'is not gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vilains sinful dedes make a cherl.
For gentillesse n'is but the renomee[2]
Of thin auncestres, for hir high bountee,[3]
Which is a strange thing to thy persone:
Thy gentillesse cometh fro God alone.
Than[4] cometh our veray gentillesse of grace,
It was no thing bequethed us with our place.
Thinketh how noble, as saith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
That out of poverte rose to high noblesse.
Redeth Senek, and redeth eke Boece,
Ther shull ye seen expresse, that it no dred is,[5]
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.[6]
And therfore, leve husbond, I thus conclude,
Al be it that min auncestres weren rude,
Yet may the highe God, and so hope I,
Granten me grace to liven vertuously:
Than am I gentil, whan that I beginne
To liven vertuously, and weiven sinne.
And ther as ye of poverte me repreve,
The highe God, on whom that we beleve,
In wilful poverte chese to lede his lif:
And certes, every man, maiden, or wif
May understond, that Jesus heven king
Ne wold not chese a vicious living.
Glad poverte is an honest thing certain.
This wol Senek and other clerkes sain.
Who so that halt him paid of his poverte,
I hold him rich, al had he not a sherte.

[1] Gentility. [2] Renown. [3] Goodness.
[4] Th[illegible] [5] There is no doubt [6] Deeds.

He that coveiteth is a poure wight,
For he wold han that is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, ne coveiteth to have,
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave.
Veray poverte is sinne proprely.[1]
Juvenal saith of poverte merily:
The poure man whan he goth by the way,
Beforn the theves he may sing and play.[2]
Poverte is hateful good; and, as I gesse,
A ful gret bringer out of besinesse;
A gret amender eke of sapience
To him, that taketh it in patience.
Poverte is this, although it seme elenge,[3]
Possession that no wight wol challenge.
Poverte ful often, whan a man is low,
Maketh his God and eke himself to know:
Poverte a spectakel is, as thinketh me,
Thurgh which he may his veray frendes see.
And therfore, sire, sin that I you not greve,
Of my poverte no more me repreve.
Now, sire, of elde, that ye repreven me:
And certes, sire, though non auctoritee
Were in no book, ye gentiles of honour
Sain, that men shuld an olde wight honour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentillesse;
And auctours shal I finden, as I gesse.
Now ther ye sain that I am foule and old,
Than drede ye not to ben a cokewold.
For filthe, and elde[4] also, so mote I the,
Ben grete wardeins upon chastitee.
But natheles, sin I know your delit,
I shal fulfill your worldly appetit.
Chese now (quod she) on of thise thinges twey,
To han me foule and old til that I dey,

[1] In this commendation of Poverty, our author seems plainly to have had in view the following passage of a fabulous conference between the Emperour Adrian and Secundus the philosopher, reported by Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Histor.* l. x. c. 71. Quid est Paupertas? *Odibile bonum; sanitatis mater*; remotio curarum; *sapientiæ repertrix;* negotium sine damno; *possessio ubique calumnid;* sine sollicitudine felicitas. What Vincent has there published appears to have been extracted from a larger collection of *Gnomæ* under the name of Secundus, which are still extant in Greek and Latin. See Fabric. Bib. Gr. l. vi. c. x. and MS. *Harl.* 399. The author of *Pierce Ploughman* has quoted and paraphrased the same passage, fol. 75.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator. [3] Strange. [4] Age.

And be to you a trewe humble wif,
And never you displese in all my lif:
Or elles wol ye han me yonge and faire,
And take your aventure of the repaire,
That shal be to your hous because of me,
Or in som other place it may wel be?
Now chese yourselven whether that you liketh.
This knight aviseth him, and sore siketh,
But at the last he said in this manere;
My lady and my love, and wif so dere,
I put me in your wise governance,
Cheseth yourself which may be most plesance
And most honour to you and me also,
I do no force the whether of the two:
For as you liketh, it sufficeth me.
Than have I got the maisterie, quod she,
Sin I may chese and governe as me lest.
Ye certes, wif, quod he, I hold it best.
Kisse me, quod she, we be no lenger wrothe,
For by my trouth I wol be to you bothe,
This is to sayn, ye bothe faire and good.
I pray to God that I mote sterven wood,[1]
But I to you be al so good and trewe,
As ever was wif, sin that the world was newe:
And but I be to-morwe as faire to seen,
As any lady, emperice, or quene,
That is betwix the Est and eke the West,
Doth with my lif and deth right as you lest.
Cast up the curtein, loke how that it is.
And whan the knight saw veraily all this,
That she so faire was, and so yonge therto,
For joye he hent[2] hire in his armes two:
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse,
A thousand time a-row he gan hire kisse:
And she obeyed him in every thing,
That mighte don him plesance or liking.
And thus they live unto hir lives ende
In parfit joye, and Jesu Crist us sende
Husbondes meke and yonge, and fressh a-bed,
And grace to overlive hem that we wed.
And eke I pray Jesus to short hir lives,
That wol not be governed by hir wives.
And old and angry nigards of dispence,
God send hem sone a veray pestilence.

[1] Die mad. [2] Seized.

THE FRERES PROLOGUE.

6847-6878.

This worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made alway a maner louring chere[1]
Upon the Sompnour, but for honestee[2]
No vilains word as yet to him spake he:
But at the last he said unto the wif;
Dame, (quod he) God yeve you right good lif,
Ye have here touched, all so mote I the,
In scole matere a ful gret difficultee.
Ye han said mochel thing right wel, I say:
But, dame, here as we riden by the way,
Us nedeth not to speken but of game,
And let auctoritees[3] in Goddes name
To preching, and to scole eke of clergie.
But if it like unto this compagnie,
I wol you of a Sompnour tell a game;
Parde ye may wel knowen by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be said;
I pray that non of you be evil apaid;
A Sompnour is a renner up and doun
With mandements for fornicatioun,
And is ybete at every tounes ende.
Tho spake our hoste; A, sire, ye shuld ben hende
And curteis, as a man of your estat,
In compagnie we wiln have no debat:
Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.
Nay, quod the Sompnour, let him say by me
What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,
By God I shal him quiten every grot.
I shal him tellen which a gret honour
It is to be a flatering limitour,
And eke of many another maner crime,
Which nedeth not rehersen at this time,

[1] Shewed a kind of discontented feeling towards him.
[2] Out of propriety. [3] Texts of Scripture.

And his office I shal him tell ywis.
Our hoste answered; pees, no more of this.
And afterward he said unto the Frere,
Tell forth your tale, min owen maister dere.

The Freres Tale.

Whilom ther was dwelling in my contree
An archedeken, a man of high degree,
That boldely did execution
In punishing of fornication,
Of witchecraft, and eke of bauderie,
Of defamation, and avouterie,[1]
Of chirche-reves,[2] and ot testaments,
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
Of usure, and of simonie also;
But certes lechours did he gretest wo;
They shulden singen, if that they were hent;[3]
And smale titheres weren foule yshent,[4]
If any persone wold upon hem plaine,
Ther might astert hem no pecunial peine.
For smale tithes, and smale offering,
He made the peple pitously to sing;
For er the bishop hent hem with his crook
They weren in the archedekens book;
Than had he thurgh his jurisdiction
Power to don on hem correction.
He had a Sompnour redy to his hond,
A slier boy was non in Englelond;
For subtilly he had his espiaille,
That taught him wel wher it might ought availle.
He coude spare of lechours on or two,
To techen him to foure and twenty mo.
For though this Sompnour wood be as an hare,
To tell his harlotrie I wol not spare,
For we ben out of hir correction,
They han of us no jurisdiction,

[1] Adultery.
[2] Churchwardens.
[3] Caught.
[4] Hurt, injured, oppressed.

Ne never shul have, terme of all hir lives.
Peter, so ben the women of the stives,
Quod this Sompnour, yput out of our cure.
Pees, with mischance and with misaventure,
Our hoste said, and let him tell his tale.
Now telleth forth, and let the Sompnour gale.[1]
Ne spareth not, min owen maister dere.
This false theef, this Sompnour, quod the frere,
Had alway baudes redy to his hond,
As any hauke to lure in Englelond,
That told him all the secree that they knewe,
For hir acquaintance was not come of newe;
They weren his approvers prively.
He tooke himself a gret profit therby:
His maister knew not alway what he wan.[2]
Withouten mandement,[3] a lewed man
He coude sompne, up peine of Cristes curse,
And they were inly[4] glad to fille his purse,
And maken him gret festes at the nale.[5]
And right as Judas hadde purses smale
And was a theef, right swiche a theef was he,
His master hadde but half his duetee.[6]
He was (if I shal yeven him his laud)[7]
A theef, and eke a Sompnour, and a baud.
He had eke wenches at his retenue,
That whether that sire Robert or sire Hue,
Or Jakke, or Rauf, or who so that it were
That lay by hem, they told it in his ere.
Thus was the wenche and he of on assent.
And he wold fecche a feined mandement,
And sompne hem to the chapitre bothe two,
And pill[8] the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he say; frend, I shal for thy sake
Do strike thee out of oure lettres blake;
Thee thar[9] no more as in this cas travaille;
I am thy frend ther I may thee availle.
Certain he knew of briboures many mo,
Than possible is to tell in yeres two:
For in this world n'is dogge for the bowe,[10]
That can an hurt dere from an hole[11] yknowe,

[1] Sing, laugh.
[2] Gained.
[3] Mandate.
[4] Inwardly, thoroughly.
[5] Alehouse.
[6] Due, duty.
[7] Praise.
[8] Plunder.
[9] Thou must.
[10] *I. e.*, the chace.
[11] Whole, unhurt.

Bet than this Sompnour knew a slie lechour,
Or an avoutrer,[1] or a paramour;
And for that was the fruit of all his rent,
Therfore on it he set all his entent.
And so befell, that ones on a day
This Sompnour, waiting ever on his pray,
Rode forth to sompne a widewe, an olde ribibe,[2]
Feining a cause, for he wold han a bribe.
And happed that he saw beforn him ride
A gay yeman under a forest side:
A bow he bare, and arwes bright and kene,
He had upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his hed with frenges blake.
Sire, quod this Sompnour, haile and wel atake.[3]
Welcome, quod he, and every good felaw;
Whider ridest thou under this grene shaw?
(Saide this yeman) wolt thou fer[4] to-day?
This Sompnour him answerd, and saide, nay.
Here faste by (quod he) is min entent
To riden, for to reisen up a rent,
That longeth[5] to my lordes duetee.
A, art thou than a baillif? Ye, quod he.
(He dorste not for veray filth and shame
Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.)
De par dieux, quod this yeman, leve brother,
Thou art a baillif, and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this contree.
Of thin acquaintance I wol prayen thee,
And eke of brotherhed, if that thee list.
I have gold and silver lying in my chist;
If that thee hap to come in to our shire,
Al shal be thin, right as thou wolt desire.
Grand mercy, quod this Sompnour, by my faith.
Everich in others hond his trouthe laith,
For to be sworne brethren til they dey.
In daliaunce they riden forth and pley.
This Sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,
As ful of venime ben thise wariangles,[6]
And ever enquering upon every thing,
Brother, quod he, wher is now your dwelling,

[1] Adulterer.
[2] Probably some shrill musical instrument, used as a term of reproach.
[3] Well met.
[4] Goest thou far?
[5] Belongeth.
[6] A kind of noisy bird.

Another day if that I shuld you seche?
This yeman him answerd in softe speche;
Brother, quod he, fer in the North contree,
Wheras I hope somtime I shal thee see.
Or we depart I shal thee so wel wisse,
That of min hous ne shalt thou never misse.
Now brother, quod this Sompnour, I you pray,
Teche me, while that we riden by the way,
(Sith that ye ben a baillif as am I)
Som subtiltee, and tell me faithfully
In min office how I may moste winne.
And spareth not for conscience or for sinne,
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.
Now by my trouthe, brother min, said he,
As I shal tellen thee a faithful tale.
My wages ben ful streit[1] and eke ful smale;
My lord is hard to me and dangerous,
And min office is ful laborious;
And therfore by extortion I leve,
Forsoth I take all that men wol me yeve.
Algates by sleighte or by violence
Fro yere to yere I win all my dispence;
I can no better tellen faithfully.
Now certes, (quod this Sompnour) so fare I;
I spare not to taken, God it wote,
But if it be to hevy or to hote.
What I may gete in conseil prively,
No maner conscience of that have I.
N'ere[2] min extortion, I might not liven,
Ne of swiche japes wel I not be shriven.
Stomak ne conscience know I non;
I shrew thise shrifte-faders[3] everich on.
Wel be we met by God and by Seint Jame.
But leve brother, tell me than thy name,
Quod this Sompnour. Right in this mene while
This yeman gan a litel for to smile.
Brother, quod he, wolt thou that I thee telle?
I am a fend, my dwelling is in helle,
And here I ride about my pourchasing,
To wote wher men wol give me any thing.
My pourchas is th'effect of all my rente.
Loke how thou ridest for the same entente

[1] Narrow. [2] Were it not for.
[3] I curse these father confessors.

To winnen good, thou rekkest never how,
Right so fare I, for riden wol I now
Unto the worldes ende for a praye.
A, quod this Sompnour, *benedicite*, what say ye?
I wend ye were a yeman trewely.
Ye have a mannes shape as wel as I.
Have ye than a figure determinat
In helle, ther[1] ye ben in your estat?
Nay certainly, quod he, ther have we non,
But whan us liketh we can take us on,
Or elles make you wene[2] that we ben shape
Somtime like a man, or like an ape;
Or like an angel can I ride or go;
It is no wonder thing though it be so,
A lousy jogelour[3] can deceiven thee,
And parde yet can[4] I more craft than he.
Why, quod the Sompnour, ride ye than or go
In sondry shape, and not alway in on?
For we, quod he, wol us swiche forme make,
As most is able our preye for to take.
What maketh you to han al this labour?
Ful many a cause, leve sire Sompnour,
Saide this fend. But alle thing hath time;
The day is short, and it is passed prime,
And yet ne wan I nothing in this day;
I wol entend to winning, if I may,
And not entend our thinges to declare:
For, brother min, thy wit is al to bare
To understand, although I told hem thee.
But for thou axest, why labouren we:
For somtime we be Goddes instruments,
And menes to don his commandements,
Whan that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers actes and in divers figures;
Withouten him we have no might certain,
If that him list to stonden theragain.
And somtime at our praiere han we leve,[5]
Only the body, and not the soule to greve:
Witnesse on Job, whom that we diden wo.
And somtime han we might on bothe two,
This is to sain, on soule and body eke.
And somtime be we suffered for to seke

[1] Where. [2] Think.
[3] Juggler. [4] Know. [5] Leave.

Upon a man, and don his soule unreste
And not his body, and all is for the beste.
Whan he withstandeth our temptation,
It is a cause of his salvation,
Al be it that it was not our entente
He shuld be sauf, but that we wold him hente.[1]
And somtime be we servants unto man,
As to the archebishop Seint Dunstan,
And to the apostle servant eke was I.
Yet tell me, quod this Sompnour, faithfully,
Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
Of elements? The fend answered, nay:
Somtime we feine,[2] and somtime we arise
With dede bodies, in ful sondry wise,
And speke as renably, and faire and wel,
As to the Phitonesse[3] did Samuel:
And yet wol som men say it was not he.
I do no force of your divinitee.
But o thing warne I thee, I wol not jape,
Thou wolt algates wete how we be shape:
Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dere,
Come, wher thee nedeth not of me to lere,
For thou shalt by thin owen experience
Conne in a chaiere rede[4] of this sentence,
Bet than Virgile, while he was on live,
Or Dant also. Now let us riden blive,
For I wol holden compagnie with thee,
Til it be so that thou forsake me.
Nay, quod this Sompnour, that shal never betide.
I am a yeman knowen is ful wide;
My trouthe wol I hold, as in this cas.
For though thou were the devil Sathanas,
My trouthe wol I hold to thee, my brother,
As I have sworne, and eche of us to other,
For to be trewe brethren in this cas,
And bothe we gon abouten our pourchas.
Take thou thy part, what that men wol thee yeve,
And I shal min, thus may we bothe leve.
And if that any of us have more than other,
Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.

[1] Seize, get possession of. [2] Feign.
[3] Pythoness, the witch of Endor.
[4] Learn in a professor's chair the meaning.

I graunte, quod the devil, by my fay.
And with that word they riden forth hir way,
And right at entring of the tounes ende,
To which this Sompnour shope[1] him for to wende,
They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,
Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
Depe was the way, for which the carte stood:
The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,
Heit scot, heit brok, what spare ye for the stones?
The fend (quod he) you fecche body and bones,
As ferforthly[2] as ever ye were foled,
So mochel wo as I have with you tholed.[3]
The devil have al, bothe hors, and cart, and hay.
The Sompnour sayde, here shal we have a pray;
And nere the fende he drow, as nought ne were,
Ful prively, and rouned[4] in his ere:
Herken my brother, herken, by thy faith,
Herest thou not, how that the carter saith?
Hent[5] it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,
Both hay and cart, and eke his caples[6] three.
Nay, quod the devil, God wot, never a del,
It is not his entente, trust thou me wel,
Axe him thyself, if thou not trowest me,
Or elles stint a while and thou shalt see.
This carter thakketh[7] his hors upon the croupe,[8]
And they begonne to drawen and to stoupe.
Heit now, quod he, ther Jesu Crist you blesse,
And all his hondes werk, both more and lesse:
That was wel twight,[9] min owen liard[10] boy,
I pray God save thy body and Seint Eloy.
Now is my cart out of the slough parde.
Lo, brother, quod the fend, what told I thee?
Here may ye seen, min owen dere brother,
The cherl spake o thing, but he thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our viage;
Here win I nothing upon this cariage.
Whan that they comen somwhat out of toun,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to roune;
Brother, quod he, here woneth an old rebekke,
That had almost as lefe to lese hire nekke,

[1] Shaped, resolved. [2] Quickly. [3] Suffered.
[4] Whispered. [5] Seize. [6] Horses.
[7] Striketh. [8] The ridge of the back.
[9] Pulled. [10] A common name for a grey horse.

As for to yeve a peny of hire good.
I wol have twelf pens[1] though that she be wood,[2]
Or I wol somone hire to our office;
And yet, God wot, of hire know I no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this contree,
Winnen thy cost, take here ensample of me.
This Sompnour clappeth at the widewes gate;
Come out, he sayd, thou olde very trate,[3]
I trow thou hast som frere or preest with thee.
Who clappeth?[4] said this wif, *benedicite*,
God save you, sire, what is your swete will?
I have, quod he, of somons here a bill.
Up peine of cursing, loke that thou be
To-morwe before the archedekenes knee,
To answere to the court, of certain thinges.
Now lord, quod she, Crist Jesu, king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have ben sike, and that ful many a day.
I may not go so fer (quod she) ne ride,
But I be ded, so priketh it in my side.
May I not axe a libel,[5] sire Sompnour,
And answere ther by my procuratour[6]
To swiche thing as men wold apposen me?
Yes, quod this Sompnour, pay anon, let see,
Twelf pens to me, and I wol thee acquite.
I shal no profit han therby but lite:
My maister hath the profit and not I
Come of, and let me riden hastily;
Yeve me twelf pens, I may no lenger tarie.
Twelf pens, quod she, now lady Seinte Marie
So wisly helpe me out of care and sinne,
This wide world though that I shuld it winne,
Ne have I not twelf pens within my hold.
Ye knowen wel that I am poure and old;
Kithe[7] your almesse upon me poure wretche.
Nay than, quod he, the foule fend me fetche,
If I thee excuse, though thou shuldest be spilt.
Alas! quod she, God wot, I have no gilt.
Pay me, quod he, or by the swete Seinte Anne
As I wol bere away thy newe panne

[1] Pence. [2] Mad. [3] Trot, a familiar epithet for an old woman.
[4] Knocketh. [5] A little book, or writ of indulgence.
[6] Proctor. [7] Shew, bestow.

For dette, which thou owest me of old,
Whan that thou madest thyn husbond cokewold,
I paied at home for thy correction.
Thou liest, quod she, by my salvation,
Ne was I never or now, widew ne wif,
Sompned unto your court in all my lif;
Ne never I n'as but of my body trewe.
Unto the devil rough and blake of hewe
Yeve I thy body and my panne also.
And whan the devil herd hire cursen so
Upon hire knees, he sayd in this manere;
Now, Mabily, min owen moder dere,
Is this your will in ernest that ye sey?
The devil, quod she, so fetche him or he dey,
And panne and all, but he wol him repent.
Nay, olde stot, that is not min entent,
Quod this Sompnour, for to repenten me
For any thing that I have had of thee;
I wold I had thy smok and every cloth.
Now brother, quod the devil, be not wroth;
Thy body and this panne ben min by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yet to-night,
Wher thou shalt knowen of our privetee
More than a maister of divinitee.
And with that word the foule fend him hent.
Body and soule, he with the devil went,
Wher as thise Sompnours han hir heritage;
And God that maked after his image
Mankinde, save and gide us all and some,
And lene this Sompnour good man to become.
Lordings, I coude have told you, (quod this frere)
Had I had leiser for this Sompnour here,
After the text of Crist, and Poule,[1] and John,
And of oure other doctours many on,
Swiche peines, that your hertes might agrise,
Al be it so, that no tonge may devise,
Though that I might a thousand winter telle,
The peines of thilke cursed hous or helle.
But for to kepe us fro that cursed place,
Waketh, and prayeth Jesu of his grace,
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
Herkneth this word, beware as in this cas.

[1] Paul.

The leon sit in his awaite alway
To sle the innocent, if that he may.
Disposeth ay your hertes to withstond
The fend, that you wold maken thral and bond;
He may not tempten you over your might,
For Crist wol be your champion and your knight;
And prayeth, that this Sompnour him repent
Of his misdedes, or that the fend him hent.

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGUE.

7247–7278.

This Sompnour in his stirops high he stood,
Upon this Frere his herte was so wood,
That like an aspen leef he quoke for ire:
Lordings, quod he, but o thing I desire,
I you beseche, that of your curtesie,
Sin ye han herd this false Frere lie,
As suffereth[1] me I may my tale telle.
This Frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,
And, God it wot, that is but litel wonder,
Freres and fendes ben but litel asonder.
For parde, ye han often time herd telle,
How that a Frere ravished was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an angel lad[2] him up and doun,
To shewen him the peines that ther were,
In all the place saw he not a Frere,
Of other folk he saw ynow in wo.
Unto this angel spake the Frere tho;
Now, sire, quod he, han Freres swiche a grace,
That non of hem shal comen in this place?
Yes, quod this angel, many a millioun:
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
(And now hath Sathanas, saith he, a tayl
Broder than of a carrike[3] is the sayl)
Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas, quod he,
Shew forth thin ers, and let the Frere see
Wher is the nest of Freres in this place.
And er than half a furlong way of space,
Right so as bees out swarmen of an hive,
Out of the devils ers ther gonnen drive
A twenty thousand Freres on a route.
And thurghout hell they swarmed al aboute,

[1] That ye suffer. [2] Led. [3] A large ship.

And com agen, as fast as they may gon,
And in his ers they crepen everich on:
He clapt his tayl agen, and lay ful still.
This Frere, whan he loked had his fill
Upon the turments of this sory place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Into his body agen, and he awoke;
But natheles for fere yet he quoke,
So was the devils ers ay in his mind
That is his heritage of veray kind.
God save you alle, save this cursed frere;
My prologue wol I end in this manere.

The Sompnoures Tale.

Lordings, ther is in Yorkshire, as I gesse,
A mersh contree ycalled Holdernesse,
In which ther went a limitour aboute
To preche, and eke to beg, it is no doute.
And so befell that on a day this frere
Had preched at a chirche in his manere,
And specially aboven every thing
Excited he the peple in his preching
To trentals,[1] and to yeve for Goddes sake,
Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
Ther as divine service is honoured,
Not ther as it is wasted and devoured,
Ne ther it nedeth not for to be yeven,
As to possessioners, that mowen leven
(Thanked be God) in wele and abundance.
Trentals, sayd he, deliveren fro penance
Hir frendes soules, as wel olde as yonge,
Ye, whan that they ben hastily ysonge,
Not for to hold a preest jolif and gay,
He singeth not but o masse on a day.
Delivereth out (quod he) anon the soules.
Ful hard it is, with fleshhook or with oules

[1] A service of thirty masses for the dead.

To ben yclawed, or to bren or bake:
Now spede you hastily for Cristes sake.
And whan this frere had said all his entent,
With *qui cum patre* forth his way he went.
Whan folk in chirche had yeve him what hem lest,
He went his way, no lenger wold he rest,
With scrippe and tipped staf, ytucked hie:
In every hous he gan to pore and prie,
And begged mele and chese, or elles corn.
His felaw had a staf tipped with horn,
A pair of tables all of ivory,
And a pointel[1] ypolished fetisly,
And wrote alway the names, as he stood,
Of alle folk that yave hem any good,
Askaunce[2] that he wolde for hem preye.
Yeve us a bushel whete, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichel,[3] or a trippe[4] of chese,
Or elles what you list, we may not chese;[5]
A Goddes halfpeny, or a masse peny;
Or yeve us of your braun, if ye have any,
A dagon[6] of your blanket, leve dame,
Our suster dere, (lo here I write your name)

[1] Pencil, style.

[2] The Glossary interprets *ascaunce* to [illegible] *askew, aside, sideways; in a side view;* upon what authority I know not. It will be better to examine the other passages in which the same word occurs, before we determine the sense of it. See ver. 16, 306: *Ascaunce* that craft is so light to lere.—Tro. i. 285: *Ascaunce*, lo! is this not wisely spoken?—Ibid. 292: *Ascaunce*, what, may I not stonden here?—Lydg. Trag. fol. 136, b: *Ascaunce* I am of maners most chaungeable. In the first and last instance, as well as in the text, *ascaunce* seems to signify simply *as if; quasi*. In the two others it signifies a little more; *as if to say*. This latter signification may be clearly established from the third line, which in the Italian original (Filostrato di Boccaccio, l. i.) stands thus: *Quasi dicesse*, e no ci si puo stare? So that *ascaunce* is there equivalent to *quasi dicesse* in Italian.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] "It was called a Goddes kichel, because godfathers and godmothers used commonly to give one of them to their godchildren, when they asked blessing." Sp. And so we are to suppose a Goddes halfpeny, in ver. 7331, was called for the same reason, &c. But this is all *gratis dictum*, I believe. The phrase is French, and the true meaning of it is explained by M. de la Monnoye in a note upon the *Contes de B. D. Periers*, t. ii. p. 107. *Belle serrure de Dieu*] Expression du petit peuple, qui raporte pieusement tout à Dieu.—Rien n'est plus commun dans la bouche des bonnes vieilles, que ces especes d'Hebraismes: *Il m'en coute un bel ecu de Dieu; Il ne me reste que ce pauvre enfant de Dieu; Donez moi une benite aumône de Dieu.*—*Tyrwhitt.*

[4] A small piece. [5] Choose. [6] Slip.

Bacon or beef, or swiche thing as ve find.
A sturdy harlot went hem ay behind,
That was hir hostes man, and bare a sakke,
And what men yave hem, laide it on his bakke.
And whan that he was out at dore, anon
He planed away the names everich on,
That he before had written in his tables:
He served hem with nifles[1] and with fables.
Nay, ther thou liest, thou Sompnour, quod the frere.
Pees, quod our hoste, for Cristes moder dere,
Tell forth thy tale, and spare it not at all.
So thrive I, quod this Sompnour, so I shall.
So long he went fro hous to hous, til he
Came to an hous, ther he was wont to be
Refreshed more than in a hundred places.
Sike lay the husbond man, whos that the place is,
Bedred[2] upon a couche low he lay:
Deus hic, quod he, O Thomas frend, good day,
Sayde this frere all curtisly and soft.
Thomas, quod he, God yelde it you, ful oft
Have I upon this benche faren ful wele,
Here have I eten many a mery mele.
And fro the benche he drove away the cat,
And laied adoun his potent[3] and his hat,
And eke his scrip, and set himself adoun:
His felaw was ywalked into-toun
Forth with his knave, into that hostelrie,
Wher as he shope[4] him thilke night to lie.
O dere maister, quod this sike man,
How have ye faren sin that March began?
I saw you not this fourtene night and more.
God wot, quod he, laboured have I ful sore,
And specially for thy salvation
Have I sayd many a precious orison,
And for our other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have this day ben at your chirche at messe,
And said a sermon to my simple wit,
Not all after the text of holy writ,
For it is hard to you, as I suppose,
And therefore wol I teche you ay the glose.
Glosing is a ful glorious thing certain,
For letter sleth,[5] so as we clerkes sain.

[1] Trifles. [2] Bedridden. [3] Walking-stick.
[4] Shaped. [5] The letter killeth.

Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,
And spend hir good ther it is resonable.
And ther I saw our dame, a, wher is she?
Yonder I trow that in the yard she be,
Sayde this man, and she wol come anon.
Ey maister, welcome be ye by Seint John,
Sayde this wif, how fare ye hertily?
This frere ariseth up ful curtisly,
And hire embraceth in his armes narwe,
And kisseth hire swete, and chirketh[1] as a sparwe
With his lippes: dame, quod he, right wel,
As he that is your servant every del,
Thanked be God, that you yaf soule and lif,
Yet saw I not this day so faire a wif
In all the chirche, God so save me.
Ye, God amende defautes, sire, quod she,
Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.
Grand mercy, dame, that have I found alway.
But of your grete goodnesse, by your leve,
I wolde pray you that ye not you greve,
I wol with Thomas speke a litel throw:[2]
Thise curates ben so negligent and slow
To gropen tendrely a conscience.
In shrift, in preching is my diligence
And study, in Peters wordes and in Poules,
I walke and fisshe Cristen mennes soules,
To yeld our Lord Jesu his propre rent;
To sprede his word is sette all min entent.
Now by your faith, o dere sire, quod she,
Chideth him wel for Seinte Charitee.
He is ay angry as is a pissemire,
Though that he have all that he can desire,
Though I him wrie[3] a-night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg and eke min arm,
He groneth as our bore, lith in our stie:
Other disport of him right non have I,
I may not plese him in no maner cas.
O Thomas, *jeo vous die*, Thomas, Thomas,
This maketh the fend, this muste ben amended.
Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,
And therof wol I speke a word or two.
Now, maister, quod the wif, er that I go,

[1] Chirpeth. [2] Time. [3] Cover.

What wol ye dine? I wol go theraboute.
Now, dame, quod he, *jeo vous dis sans doute*
Have I nat of a capon but the liver,
And of your white bred nat but a shiver,
And after that a rosted pigges hed,
(But I ne wolde for me no beest were ded)
Than had I with you homly suffisance.
I am a man of litel sustenance.
My spirit hath his fostring in the Bible.
My body is ay so redy and so penible[1]
To waken, that my stomak is destroied.
I pray you, dame, that ye be nought annoied,
Though I so frendly you my conseil shewe;
By God I n'old have told it but a fewe.
Now, sire, quod she, but o word er I go.
My child is ded within thise wekes two,
Sone after that ye went out of this toun.
His deth saw I by revelatioun,
Sayde this frere, at home in our dortour.[2]
I dare wel sain, that er than half an hour
After his deth, I saw him borne to blisse
In min avision, so God me wisse.
So did our sextein, and our fermerere,[3]
That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;
They may now, God be thanked of his lone,[4]
Maken hir jubilee, and walke alone.
And up I arose, and all our covent eke,
With many a tere trilling on our cheke,
Withouten noise or clatering of belles,
Te deum was our song, and nothing elles,
Save that to Crist I bade an orison,
Thanking him of my revelation.
For, sire and dame, trusteth me right wel,
Our orisons ben more effectuel,
And more we seen of Cristes secree thinges,
Than borel[5] folk, although that they be kinges.
We live in poverte, and in abstinence,
And borel folk in richesse and dispence
Of mete and drinke, and in hir foule delit.
We han this worldes lust all in despit.
Lazar and Dives liveden diversely,
And divers guerdon hadden they therby.

[1] Painstaking. [2] Dormitory. [3] Keeper of the infirmary.
[4] Loan, gift. [5] Common. See on ver. 5988.

Who so wol pray, he must fast and be clene,
And fat his soule, and make his body lene.
We fare, as sayth the apostle; cloth and food
Sufficeth us, though they be not ful good.
The clenenesse and the fasting of us freres,
Maketh that Crist accepteth our praieres.
Lo, Moises forty daies and forty night
Fasted, er that the high God ful of might
Spake with him in the mountagne of Sinay
With empty wombe of fasting many a day,
Received he the lawe, that was writen
With Goddes finger; and Eli, wel ye witen,
In mount Oreb, er he had any speche
With highe God, that is our lives leche,[1]
He fasted long, and was in contemplance.
Aaron, that had the temple in governance,
And eke the other preestes everich on,
Into the temple whan they shulden gon
To praien for the peple, and do servise,
They n'olden drinken in no maner wise
No drinke, which that might hem dronken make,
But ther in abstinence pray and wake,
Lest that they deiden:[2] take heed what I say—
But they be sobre that for the peple pray—
Ware that I say—no more: for it sufficeth.
Our Lord Jesu, as holy writ deviseth,
Yave us ensample of fasting and praieres:
Therfore we mendiants, we sely[3] freres,
Ben wedded to poverte and continence,
To charitee, humblesse, and abstinence,
To persecution for rightwisnesse,
To weping, misericorde, and to clenenesse.
And therfore may ye see that our praieres
(I speke of us, we mendiants,[4] we freres)
Ben to the highe God more acceptable
Than youres, with your festes at your table.
Fro Paradis first, if I shal not lie,
Was man out chased for his glotonie,
And chast was man in Paradis certain.
But herken now, Thomas, what I shal sain,
I have no text of it, as I suppose,
But I shal find it in a maner glose;[5]

[1] Physician. [2] Died. [3] Harmless.
[4] Mendicants. [5] A sort of gloss or note.

That specially our swete Lord Jesus
Spake this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
Blessed be they that poure in spirit ben.
And so forth all the gospel may ye sen,
Whether it be liker our profession,
Or hirs that swimmen in possession,
Fie on hir pompe, and on hir glotonie,
And on hir lewednesse: I hem defie.
Me thinketh they ben like Jovinian,
Fat as a whale, and walken as a swan;
Al vinolent as botel in the spence;[1]
Hir praier is of ful gret reverence;
Whan they for soules say the Psalm of Davit,
Lo, but they say, *Cor meum eructavit.*
Who foloweth Cristes gospel and his lore
But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,
Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
Therfore right as an hauke upon a sours[2]
Up springeth into the aire, right so praieres
Of charitable and chast besy freres,
Maken hir sours to Goddes eres[3] two.
Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ride or go,
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
N'ere thou our broder, shuldest thou not thrive.
In our chapitre pray we day and night
To Crist, that he thee sende hele and might
Thy body for to welden[4] hastily.
God wot, quod he, nothing therof fele I,
As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeres
Have spended upon divers maner freres
Ful many a pound, yet fare I never the bet;
Certain my good have I almost beset:[5]
Farewel my good, lor it is al ago.
The frere answered, O Thomas, dost thou so?
What nedeth you diverse freres to seche?
What nedeth him that hath a parfit leche,
To sechen other leches in the toun?
Your inconstance is your confusion.
Hold ye than me, or elles our covent,
To pray for you ben insufficient?
Thomas, that jape n'is not worth a mite;
Your maladie is for we han to lite.

[1] Store-room. [2] Rise. [3] Ears.
[4] Govern. [5] Employed, spent.

A, yeve that covent half a quarter otes;
And yeve that covent four and twenty grotes;
And yeve that frere a peny, and let him go:
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
What is a ferthing worth parted on twelve?
Lo, eche thing that is oned[1] in himselve
Is more strong than whan it is yscatered.
Thomas, of me thou shalt not ben yflatered,
Thou woldest han our labour al for nought.
The highe God, that all this world hath wrought,
Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire.
Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire
As for myself, but that all our covent
To pray for you is ay so diligent:
And for to bilden Cristes owen chirche.
Thomas, if ye wol lernen for to wirche,[2]
Ot bilding up of chirches may ye finde
If it be good, in Thomas lif of Inde.
Ye liggen here ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devil set your herte on fire,
And chiden here this holy innocent
Your wif, that is so good and patient.
And therfore trow me, Thomas, if thee lest,
Ne strive not with thy wif, as for the best.
And bere this word away now by thy faith,
Touching swiche thing, lo, what the wise saith:
Within thy hous ne be thou no leon;
To thy suggets[3] do non oppression;
Ne make thou not thin acquaintance to flee.
And yet, Thomas, eftsones charge I thee,
Beware from ire that in thy bosom slepeth,
Ware fro the serpent, that so slily crepeth
Under the gras, and stingeth subtilly.
Beware, my sone, and herken patiently,
That twenty thousand men han lost hir lives
For striving with hir lemmans and hir wives.
Now sith ye han so holy and meek a wif,
What nedeth you, Thomas, to maken strif?
Ther n'is ywis no serpent so cruel,
Whan man tredeth on his tail, ne half so fel,
As woman is, whan she hath caught an ire;
Veray[4] vengeance is than all hire desire.

[1] United.
[2] Work.
[3] Subjects.
[4] True.

Ire is a sinne, on of the grete seven,
Abhominable unto the God of heven,
And to himself it is destruction.
This every lewed[1] vicar and parson
Can say, how ire engendreth homicide;
Ire is in soth executour of pride.
I coud of ire say so mochel sorwe,
My tale shulde lasten til to-morwe.
And therfore pray I God both day and night,
An irous[2] man God send him litel might.
It is gret harm, and certes gret pitee
To sette an irous man in high degree.
Whilom ther was an irous potestat,
As saith Senek,[3] that during his estat
Upon a day out riden knightes two.
And, as fortune wold that it were so,
That on of hem came home, that other nought.
Anon the knight before the juge is brought,
That saide thus; thou hast thy felaw slain,
For which I deme thee to the deth certain.
And to another knight commanded he;
Ge, lede him to the deth, I charge thee.
And happed, as they wenten by the wey
Toward the place ther as he shulde dey,
The knight came, which men wenden[4] had be dede.
Than thoughten they it was the beste rede
To lede hem bothe to the juge again.
They saiden, lord, the knight ne hath not slain
His felaw, here he stondeth hol alive.
Ye shull be ded, quod he, so mot I thrive,
That is to say, both on, and two, and three.
And to the firste knight right thus spake he.
I damned[5] thee, thou must algate be ded:
And thou also must nedes lese thyn hed,
For thou art cause why thy felaw deyeth.
And to the thridde knight right thus he seyeth,
Thou hast not don that I commanded thee.
And thus he did do slen hem alle three.
Irous Cambises was eke dronkelew,[6]
And ay delighted him to ben a shrew.

[1] Simple, unlearned. [2] Angry.
[3] This story is told of Cn. Piso, by Seneca de Irâ, i. c. xvi., and of an Emperor Heraclius, in the *Gesta Rom.* c. cxi.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[4] Thought. [5] Condemned.
[6] Drunken, given to drink. See Seneca de Irâ, iii. 14.

And so befell, a lord of his meinie,[1]
That loved vertuous moralitee,
Sayd on a day betwix hem two right thus
A lord is lost, if he be vicious;
And dronkennesse is eke a foule record
Of any man, and namely[2] of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eye and many an ere
Awaiting on a lord, and he n'ot wher.
For Goddes love drinke more attemprely:[3]
Win[4] maketh man to lesen[5] wretchedly
His mind, and eke his limmes everich on.
The revers shalt thou see, quod he, anon,
And preve it by thyn owen experience,
That win ne doth to folk no swiche offence.
Ther is no win bereveth me my might
Of hond, ne foot, ne of min eyen sight.
And for despit he dranke mochel more
An hundred part than he had don before,
And right anon, this cursed irous wretche
This knightes sone let before him fetche,
Commanding him he shuld before him stond:
And sodenly he took his bow in hond,
And up the streng he pulled to his ere,
And with an arwe he slow the child right ther.
Now whether have I a siker[6] hond or non?
Quod he, Is all my might and minde agon?
Hath win bereved me min eyen sight?
What shuld I tell the answer of the knight?
His son was slain, ther is no more to say.
Beth ware[7] therfore with lordes for to play,
Singeth[8] *Placebo*, and I shal if I can,
But if it be unto a poure man:
To a poure man men shuld his vices telle,
But not to a lord, though he shuld go to helle
Lo, irous Cirus,[9] thilke Persien,[10]
How he destroyed the river of Gisen,[11]
For that an hors of his was dreint[12] therin,
Whan that he wente Babilon to win:
He made that the river was so smal,
That wimmen might it waden over al.

[1] Court. [2] Especially. [3] Temperately.
[4] Wine. [5] Lose. [6] Sickly, unsteady.
[7] Beware ye how ye play, &c. [8] Sing. [9] Cyrus.
[10] *I. e.*, also a Persian. [11] Gyndes. [12] Drowned.

Lo, what said he, that so wel techen can?
Ne be no felaw to non irous man,
Ne with no wood[1] man walke by the way,
Lest thee repent; I wol no forther say.
Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
Thou shalt me find as just, as is a squire;
Hold not the devils knif ay to thin herte,
Thin anger doth thee all to sore smerte,
But shew to me all thy confession.
Nay, quod the sike man, by Seint Simon
I have ben shriven this day of my curat;
I have him told al holly[2] min estat.
Nedeth no mo to speke of it, sayth he,
But if me list of min humilitee.
Yeve me than of thy gold to make our cloistre,
Quod he, for many a muscle and many an oistre.
Whan other men han ben ful wel at ese,
Hath been our food, our cloistre for to rese:[3]
And yet, God wot, uneth[4] the fundament
Parfourmed is, ne of our pavement
N'is not a tile yet within our wones:[5]
By God we owen fourty pound for stones.
Now help, Thomas, for him that harwed[6] helle,
For elles mote we oure bokes selle,
And if ye lacke oure predication,[7]
Than goth this world all to destruction
For who so fro this world wold us bereve,
So God me save, Thomas, by your leve,
He wold bereve out of this world the sonne.
For who can teche and worken as we conne?
And that is not of litel time, (quod he)
But sithen Elie was, and Elisee,
Han freres ben, that find I of record,
In charitee, ythonked be our Lord.
Now, Thomas, help for Seinte Charitee.
And doun anon he sette him on his knee.
This sike man woxe wel neigh wood for ire,
He wolde that the frere had ben a-fire
With his false dissimulation.
Swiche thing as is in my possession,

[1] Mad.
[2] Wholly.
[3] Raise.
[4] Scarcely, *i.e.*, not yet.
[5] Dwellings.
[6] Harassed, terrified.
[7] Preaching.

Quod he, that may I yeve you and non other:
Ye sain me thus, how that I am your brother.
Ye certes, quod this frere, ye, trusteth wel;
I took our dame the letter of our sele.
Now wel, quod he, and somwhat shal I yeve
Unto your holy covent while I live;
And in thin hond thou shalt it have anon,
On this condition, and other non,
That thou depart[1] it so, my dere brother,
That every frere have as moche as other:
This shalt thou swere on thy profession
Withouten fraud or cavilation.
I swere it, quod the frere, upon my faith.
And therwithall his hond in his he layth;
Lo here my faith, in me shal be no lak.
Than put thin hond adoun right by my bak,
Saide this man, and grope wel behind,
Benethe my buttok, ther thou shalte find
A thing, that I have hid in privetee.
A, thought this frere, that shal go with me.
And doun his hond he launcheth to the clifte,[2]
In hope for to finden ther a gifte.
And whan this sike man felte this frere
About his towel gropen ther and here,
Amid his hond he let the frere a fart;
Ther n'is no capel drawing in a cart,
That might han let a fart of swiche a soun.
The frere up sterte, as doth a wood leoun
A, false cherl, quod he, for Goddes bones,
This hast thou in despit don for the nones:
Thou shalt abie[3] this fart, if that I may.
His meinie,[4] which that herden this affray,
Came leping in, and chased out the frere,
And forth he goth with a ful angry chere,
And fet[5] his felaw, ther as lay his store:
He loked as it were a wilde bore,
And grinte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A sturdy pas doun to the court he goth,
Wher as ther woned[6] a man of gret honour,
To whom that he was alway confessour:
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere came, as he were in a rage,

[1] Divide. [2] Cleft. [3] Suffer for.
[4] Servants. [5] Fetched. [6] Dwelt.

Wher as this lord sat eting at his bord:
Unnethes might the frere speke o word,
Til atte last he saide, God you see.
This lord gan loke, and saide, *Benedicite!*
What? frere John, what maner world is this?
I see wel that som thing ther is amis;
Ye loken as the wood were ful of theves.
Sit doun anon, and tell me what your greve is,
And it shal ben amended, if I may.
I have, quod he, had a despit to day,
God yelde you, adoun in your village,
That in this world ther n'is so poure a page,
That he n'olde have abhominatioun
Of that I have received in youre toun:
And yet ne greveth me nothing so sore,
As that the olde cherl, with lokkes hore,
Blasphemed hath oure holy covent eke.
Now, maister, quod this lord, I you beseke.
No maister, sire, quod he, but servitour,
Though I have had in scole that honour.
God liketh not, that men us Rabi call,
Neither in market, ne in your large hall.
No force,[1] quod he, but tell me all your grefe.
Sire, quod this Frere, an odious meschefe
This day betid is to min ordre, and me,
And so *per consequens* to eche degree
Of holy chirche, God amende it sone.
Sire, quod the lord, ye wot what is to don
Distempre you not, ye ben my confessour.
Ye ben the salt of the erthe, and the savour;
For Goddes love your patience now hold;
Telle me your grefe. And he anon him told
As ye han herd before, ye wot wel what.
The lady of the hous ay stille sat,
Til she had herde what the Frere said.
Ey, goddes moder, quod she, blisful maid,
Is ther ought elles? tell me faithfully.
Madame, quod he, how thinketh you therby?
How that me thinketh? quod she; so God me spede,
I say, a cherle hath don a cherles dede.
What shuld I say? God let him never the;[2]
His sike hed is ful of vanitee;
I hold him in a maner frenesie.

[1] No matter. [2] Never fare well, or prosper..

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His sike hed is ful of vanitee;
I hold him in a maner frenesie.

[1] No matter. [2] Never fare well, or prosper..

Madame, quod he, by God I shal not lie,
But I in other wise may ben awreke,[1]
I shal diffame him over all, ther I speke;
This false blasphemour, that charged me
To parten that wol not departed be,
To every man ylike, with meschance.
The lord sat stille, as he were in a trance,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun,
How had this cherl imaginatioun
To shewen swiche a probleme to the frere.
Never erst or now ne herd I swiche matere;
I trow the Devil put it in his mind.
In all Arsmetrike[2] shal ther no man find
Beforn this day of swiche a question.
Who shulde make a demonstration,
That every man shuld han ylike his part
As of a soun or savour of a fart?
O nice proude cherl, I shrewe his face.[3]
Lo, sires, quod the lord, with harde grace,
Who ever herd of swiche a thing or now?
To every man ylike? tell me how.
It is an impossible, it may not be.
Ey, nice cherl, God let him never the.[4]
The rombling of a fart, and every soun,
N'is but of aire reverberatioun,
And ever it wasteth lite and lite away;
Ther n'is no man can demen, by my fay,
If that it were departed equally.
What? lo my cherl, lo yet how shrewedly
Unto my confessour to-day he spake;
I hold him certain a demoniake.
Now ete your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himself a devil way.
Now stood the lordes squier atte bord,
That carf his mete, and herde word by word
Of all this thing, of which I have you sayd.
My lord, quod he, be ye not evil apaid,
I coude telle for a goune-cloth[5]
To you, sire frere, so that ye be not wroth,
How that this fart should even ydeled[6] be
Amonge your covent, if it liked thee.

[1] Avenged. [2] Arithmetic. [3] Curse his impudence.
[4] Thrive. [5] Stuff enough to make a gown. [6] Distributed.

Tell, quod the lord, and thou shalt have anon
A goune-cloth, by God and by seint John.
My lord, quod he, whan that the weder is faire,
Withouten winde, or pertourbing of aire,
Let bring a cart-whele here into this hall,
But loke that it have his spokes all;
Twelf spokes hath a cart-whele communly;
And bring me than twelf freres, wete ye why?
For threttene is a covent as I gesse:
Your confessour here for his worthinesse
Shal parfourme up the noumbre of his covent.
Than shull they knele adoun by on assent,
And to every spokes end in this manere
Ful sadly lay his nose shal a frere;
Your noble confessour, ther God him save,
Shal hold his nose upright under the nave.
Than shal this cherl, with bely stif and tought
As any tabour, hider ben ybrought;
And set him on the whele right of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,
And ye shull seen, up peril of my lif,
By veray preef that is demonstratif,
That equally the soun of it wol wende,
And eke the stinke, unto the spokes ende,
Save that this worthy man, your confessour,
(Because he is a man of gret honour)
Shal han the firste fruit, as reson is.
The noble usage of freres yet it is,
The worthy men of hem shul first be served.
And certainly he hath it wel deserved;
He hath to-day taught us so mochel good,
With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
He hadde the firste smel of fartes three,
And so wold all his brethren hardely,
He bereth him so faire and holyly.
The lord, the lady, and eche man, save the frere,
Sayden, that Jankin spake in this matere
As wel as Euclide, or elles Ptholomee.
Touching the cherl, they sayden, subtiltee
And highe wit made him speken as he spake;
He n'is no fool, ne no demoniake.
And Jankin hath ywonne a newe goune;
My tale is don, we ben almost at toune.

THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

7877–7908.

Sire Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoste said,
Ye ride as stille and coy, as doth a maid,
Were[1] newe spoused, sitting at the bord:
This day ne herd I of your tonge a word.
I trow ye studie abouten som sophime:
But Salomon saith, that every thing hath time.
For Goddes sake as beth[2] of better chere,
It is no time for to studien here.
Tell us som mery tale by your fay;
For what man that is entred in a play,
He nedes most unto the play assent.
But precheth not, as freres don in Lent,
To make us for our olde sinnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us not to slepe.
Tell us som mery thing of aventures,
Your termes, your coloures, and your figures,
Kepe hem in store, til so be ye endite
Hie stile, as whan that men to kinges write.
Speketh so plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may understonden what ye say.
This worthy Clerk benignely answerde;
Hoste, quod he, I am under your yerde,[3]
Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therfore wolde I do you obeysance,
As fer as reson asketh hardely:[4]
I wol you tell a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe[5] of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste,
I pray to God so yeve his soule reste.
Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike swete

[1] Who were. [2] Do be. [3] Staff, *i.e.*, control.
[4] Certainly. [5] Padua.

Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan[1] did of philosophie,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But deth, that wol not suffre us dwellen here,
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Hem both hath slaine, and alle we shul dye.
But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I began,
I say that first he with hie stile enditeth
(Or he the body of his tale writeth)
A proheme, in the which descriveth he
Piemont, and of Saluces the contree,
And speketh of Apennin the hilles hie,
That ben the boundes of west Lumbardie:
And of mount Vesulus in special,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal
Taketh his firste springing and his sours,
That estward ay encreseth in his cours
To Emelie[2] ward, to Ferare, and Venise,
The which a longe thing were to devise.
And trewely, as to my jugement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wol conveyen his matere:
But this is the tale which that ye mow here.

The Clerkes Tale.

Ther is right at the West side of Itaille
Doun at the rote of Vesulus the cold,
A lusty plain, habundant of vitaille,
Ther many a toun and tour thou maist behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another delitable sighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markis whilom lord was of that lond,
As were his worthy elders him before,
And obeysant, ay redy to his hond,

[1] An early lawyer of Milan, skilled in astrology and other sciences.—See *Tyrwhitt.* [2] A part of Italy, so called from the *via Æmilia.*

Were all his lieges, bothe lesse and more:
Thus in delit he liveth, and hath don yore,
Beloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Both of his lordes, and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to speken of linage,
The gentilest yborne of Lumbardie,
A faire person, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curtesie:
Discret ynough, his contree for to gie,[1]
Sauf in som thinges that he was to blame,
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought
In time coming what might him betide,
But on his lust present was all his thought,
And for to hauke and hunt on every side:
Wel neigh all other cures let he slide,
And eke he n'old (and that was worst of all)
Wedden no wif for ought that might befall.

Only that point his peple bare so sore,
That flockmel[2] on a day to him they went,
And on of hem, that wisest was of lore,[3]
(Or elles that the lord wold best assent
That he shuld tell him what the peple ment,
Or elles coud he wel shew swiche matere)
He to the markis said as ye shull here.

O noble markis, your humanitee
Assureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,[4]
As oft as time is of necessitee,
That we to you mow tell our hevinesse:
Accepteth, lord, than of your gentillesse,
That we with pitous herte unto you plaine,
And let your eres nat my vois disdaine.

Al have I not to don in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as moch as ye, my lord so dere,
Han alway shewed me favour and grace,
I dare the better aske of you a space
Of audience, to shewen our request,
And ye, my lord, to don right as you lest.

[1] Guide. [2] In a flock. [3] Counsel. [4] Confidence.

For certes, lord, so wel us liketh you
And all your werke, and ever have don, that we
Ne couden not ourself devisen how
We mighten live in more felicitee:
Save o thing, lord, if it your wille be,
That for to be a wedded man you lèst,[1]
Than were your peple in soverain hertes rest.

Boweth your nekke under the blisful yok
Of soveraintee, and not of servise,
Which that men clepen spousaile or wedlok:
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes passe in sondry wise;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ride,
Ay fleth the time, it wol no man abide.

And though your grene youthe floure as yet,
In crepeth age alway as still as ston,
And deth manaseth[2] every age, and smit
In eche estat, for ther escapeth non:
And al so certain, as we knowe eche on
That we shul die, as uncertain we all
Ben of that day whan deth shal on us fall.

Accepteth than of us the trewe entent,
That never yet refuseden your hest,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wol assent,
Chese you a wife in short time at the mest,
Borne of the gentillest and of the best
Of all this lond, so that it oughte seme
Honour to God and you, as we can deme.

Deliver us out of all this besy drede,
And take a wif, for highe Goddes sake:
For if it so befell, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deth your linage shulde slake,[3]
And that a strange successour shuld take
Your heritage, o! wo were us on live:
Wherfore we pray you hastily to wive.

Hir meke praiere and hir pitous chere
Made the markis for to han pitee.
Ye wol, quod he, min owen peple dere,

[1] Were willing. [2] Menaceth, threateneth. [3] Slacken, fail.

To that I never er thought constrainen me.
I me rejoyced of my libertee,
That selden[1] time is found in mariage;
Ther I was free, I moste ben in servage.

But natheles I see your trewe entent,
And trust upon your wit, and have don ay:
Wherfore of my free will I wol assent
To wedden me, as sone as ever I may.
But ther as ye han profred me to-day
To chesen me a wif, I you relese
That chois, and pray you of that profer cese.

For God it wot, that children often ben
Unlike hir worthy eldres hem betore,
Bountee cometh al of God, not of the stren,[2]
Ot which they ben ygendred and ybore:
I trust in Goddes bountee, and thertore
My mariage, and min estat, and rest
I him betake, he may don as him lest.

Let me alone in chesing of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wol endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your lif,
That what wif that I take, ye me assure
To worship hire while that hire lif may dure,
In word and werk both here and elles where,
As she an emperoures doughter were.

And forthermore this shuln ye swere, that ye
Again my chois shul never grutch ne strive.
For sith I shal forgo my libertee
At your request, as ever mote I thrive,
Ther as min herte is set, ther wol I wive:
And but ye wol assent in swiche manere,
I pray you speke no more of this matere.

With hertly will they sworen and assenten
To all this thing, ther saide not o wight nay:
Beseching him of grace, or[3] that they wenten,
That he wold granten hem a certain day
Of his spousaile, as sone as ever he may,
For yet alway the peple somwhat dred,
Lest that this markis wolde no wit wed.

[1] Seldom. [2] Stock [3] Before.

He granted hem a day, swiche as him lest,
On which he wold be wedded sikerly,
And said he did all this at hir request;
And they with humble herte ful buxumly
Kneling upon hir knees ful reverently
Him thonken all, and thus they han an end
Of hir entente, and home agen they wend.

And hereupon he to his officeres
Commandeth for the feste to purvay.
And to his privee knightes and squieres
Swiche charge he yave, as him list on hem lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And eche of hem doth al his diligence
To do unto the feste al reverence.

PARS SECUNDA.

Nought fer fro[1] thilke paleis honourable,
Wher as this markis shope his mariage,
Ther stood a thorpe,[2] of sighte delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir bestes and hir herbergage,
And of hir labour toke hir sustenance,
After that the erthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man,
Which that was holden pourest of hem all:
But highe God somtime senden can
His grace unto a litel oxes stall:
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to sight,
And Grisildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Than was she on the fairest under sonne:
Ful pourely yfostred up was she:
No likerous lust was in hire herte yronne;
Wel ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for she wolde vertue plese,
She knew wel labour, but non idel ese.

[1] Not far from. [2] Village.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed sad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde poure fader fostred she:
A few sheep spinning on the feld she kept,
She wolde not ben idel til she slept.

And whan she homward came, she wolde brin
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which she shred and sethe[1] for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing soft:
And ay she kept hire fadres lif on loft[2]
With every obeisance and diligence,
That child may don to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this poure creature,
Ful often sithe this markis sette his eye,
As he on hunting rode paraventure:
And whan it fell that he might hire espie,
He not with wanton loking of folie
His eyen cast on hire, but in sad wise
Upon hire chere he wold him oft avise,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,
And eke hire vertue, passing any wight
Of so yong age, as wel in chere as dede.
For though the peple have no gret insight
In vertue, he considered ful right
Hire bountee,[3] and disposed that he wold
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden shold.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellen what woman that it shulde be,
For which mervaille wondred many a man,
And saiden, whan they were in privetee,
Wol not our lord yet leve his vanitee?
Wol he not wedde? alas, alas the while!
Why wol he thus himself and us begile?

But natheles this markis hath do make[4]
Of gemmes, sette in gold and in asure,
Broches and ringes, for Grisildes sake,

[1] Boiled.
[2] Kept it up, supported it.
[3] Goodness.
[4] Caused to be made.

The Clerkes Tale. P. 222

And of hire clothing toke he the mesure
Of a maiden like unto hire stature,
And eke of other ornamentes all,
That unto swiche a wedding shulde fall.

The time of underne[1] of the same day
Approcheth, that this wedding shulde be,
And all the paleis put was in array,
Both halle and chambres, eche in his degree,
Houses of office stuffed with plentee
Ther mayst thou see of deinteous vitaille,
That may be found, as fer as lasteth Itaille.

This real[2] markis richely arraide,
Lordes and ladies in his compagnie,
The which unto the feste weren praide,[3]
And of his retenue the bachelerie,
With many a soun of sondry melodie,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the righte way they hold.

Grisilde of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hire shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh home as sone as ever she may.
For wel she had herd say, that thilke day
The markis shulde wedde, and, if she might,
She wolde fayn han seen som of that sight.

She thought, I wol with other maidens stond,
That ben my felawes, in our dore, and see
The markisesse, and therto wol I fond[4]
To don at home, as sone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And than I may at leiser hire behold,
If she this way unto the castel hold.

And as she wolde over the threswold gon,
The markis came and gan hire for to call,
And she set doun hire water-pot anon
Beside the threswold in an oxes stall,
And doun upon hire knees she gan to fall,
And with sad countenance kneleth still,
Til she had herd what was the lordes will.

[1] The third hour, *i.e.*, nine o'clock.
[2] Royal.
[3] Invited.
[4] Contrive.

This thoughtful markis spake unto this maid
Ful soberly, and said in this manere:
Wher is your fader, Grisildis? he said.
And she with reverence in humble chere
Answered, lord, he is al redy here.
And in she goth withouten lenger lette,[1]
And to the markis she hire fader fette.[2]

He by the hond than toke this poure man,
And saide thus, whan he him had aside:
Janicola, I neither may ne can
Lenger the plesance of min herte hide,
If that thou vouchesauf, what so betide,
Thy doughter wol I take or that I wend
As for my wif, unto hire lives end.

Thou lovest me, that wot I wel certain,
And art my faithful liegeman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare wel sain
It liketh thee, and specially therfore
Tell me that point, that I have said before,
If that thou wolt unto this purpos drawe,
To taken me as for thy son in lawe.

This soden cas this man astoned so,
That red he wex, abaist,[3] and al quaking
He stood, unnethes said he wordes mo,
But only thus; Lord, quod he, my willing
Is as ye wol, ne ageins your liking
I wol no thing, min owen lord so dere,
Right as you list, governeth[4] this matere.

Than wol I, quod this markis softely,
That in thy chambre, I, and thou, and she,
Have a collation, and wost thou why?
For I wol ask hire, if it hire wille be
To be my wif, and reule[5] hire after me:
And all this shal be don in thy presence,
I wol not speke out of thin audience.

And in the chambre, while they were aboute
The tretee, which as ye shul after here,
The peple came into the hous withoute,

[1] Longer delay. [2] Fetched. [3] Abashed.
[4] Govern, settle. [5] Rule.

And wondred hem, in how honest manere
Ententifly she kept hire fader dere:
But utterly Grisildis wonder might,
For never erst ne saw she swiche a sight.

No wonder is though that she be astoned,
To see so gret a gest come in that place,
She never was to non swiche gestes woned,[1]
For which she loked with ful pale face.
But shortly forth this matere for to chace,
Thise arn the wordes that the markis said
To this benigne, veray,[2] faithful maid.

Grisilde, he said, ye shuln wel understond,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I you wedde, and eke it may so stond
As I suppose, ye wol that it so be:
But thise demaundes aske I first (quod he)
That sin it shal be don in hasty wise,
Wol ye assent, or elles you avise?

I say this, be ye redy with good herte
To all my lust, and that I freely may
As me best thinketh do you laugh or smerte,
And never ye to grutchen, night ne day,
And eke whan I say ya, ye say not nay,
Neither by word, ne frouning countenance?
Swere this, and here I swere our alliance.

Wondring upon this thing, quaking for drede,
She saide; Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I, to thilke honour, that ye me bede,[3]
But as ye wol yourself, right so wol I:
And here I swere, that never willingly
In werk, ne thought, I n'ill you disobeie
For to be ded, though me were loth to deie.

This is ynough, Grisilde min, quod he.
And forth he goth with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after than came she,
And to the peple he said in this manere:
This is my wif, quod he, that stondeth here.
Honoureth her, and loveth hire, I pray,
Who so me loveth, ther n'is no more to say.

[1] Accustomed. [2] True. [3] Offer.

And for that nothing of hire olde gere
She shulde bring into his hous, he bad
That women shuld despoilen hire right there,
Of which thise ladies weren nothing glad
To handle hire clothes wherin she was clad:
But natheles this maiden bright of hew
Fro foot to hed they clothed han all new.

Hire heres han they kempt, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hir fingres smal
A coroune on hire hed they han ydressed,
And sette hire ful of nouches[1] gret and smal:
Of hire array what shuld I make a tale?
Unneth the peple hire knew for hire fairnesse,
Whan she transmewed[2] was in swiche richesse.

This markis hath hire spoused with a ring
Brought for the same cause, and than hire sette
Upon an hors snow-white, and wel ambling,
And to his paleis, or he lenger lette,[3]
(With joyful peple, that hire lad and mette)
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe markisesse
God hath swiche favour sent hire of his grace,
That it ne semeth not by likelinesse[4]
That she was borne and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxes stall,
But nourished in an emperoures hall.

To every wight she waxen is so dere,
And worshipful, that folk ther[5] she was bore,
And fro hire birthe knew hire yere by yere,
Unnethes[6] trowed they, but dorst han swore,
That to Janicle, of which I spake before,
She doughter n'as,[7] for as by conjecture
Hem thoughte she was another creature.

[1] Ouches. [2] Changed.
[3] Without having delayed longer.
[4] Not probable, or, not by chance.
[5] Who lived where. [6] Scarcely. [7] Was not.

For though that ever vertuous was she,
She was encresed in swiche excellence
Of thewes[1] good, yset in high bountee,
And so discrete, and faire of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
And coude so the peples herte enbrace,
That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face.

Not only of Saluces in the toun
Published was the bountee of hire name,
But eke beside in many a regioun,
If on saith wel, another saith the same:
So spredeth of hire hie bountee the fame,
That men and women, yong as wel as old,
Gon to Saluces upon hire to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but really,[2]
Wedded with fortunat honestetee,
In Goddes pees liveth ful esily
At home, and grace ynough outward had he:
And for he saw that under low degree
Was honest vertue hid, the peple him held
A prudent man, and that is seen ful seld.

Not only this Grisildis thurgh hire wit
Coude all the fete of wifly homlinesse,
But eke whan that the cas required it,
The comune profit coude she redresse:
Ther n'as discord, rancour, ne hevinesse
In all the lond, that she ne coude appese,
And wisely bring hem all in hertes ese.

Though that hire husbond absent were or no
If gentilmen, or other of that contree
Were wroth, she wolde bringen hem at on,
So wise and ripe wordes hadde she,
And jugement of so gret equitee,
That she from heven sent was, as men wend,
Peple to save, and every wrong to amend.

Not longe time after that this Grisilde
Was wedded, she a doughter hath ybore,
All had hire lever han borne a knave child:

[1] Manners. [2] Royally.

Glad was the markis and his folk therfore,
For though a maiden childe come all before,
She may unto a knave child atteine
By likelyhed, sin she n'is not barreine.

PARS TERTIA.

Ther fell, as it befalleth times mo,
Whan that this childe had souked but a throwe,[1]
This markis in his herte longed so
To tempt his wif, hire sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This marveillous desir his wif to assay,
Needles, God wot, he thought hire to affray.

He had assaied hire ynough before,
And found hire ever good, what nedeth it
Hire for to tempt, and alway more and more?
Though som men praise it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I say that evil it sit
To assay a wif whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in anguish and in drede.

For which this markis wrought in this manere;
He came a-night alone ther as she lay
With sterne face, and with ful trouble chere,
And sayde thus: Grisilde, (quod he) that day
That I you toke out of your poure array,
And put you in estat of high noblesse,
Ye han it not forgotten, as I gesse.

I say, Grisilde, this present dignitee,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you toke in poure estat ful low,
For ony wele ye mote yourselven know.
Take hede of every word that I you say,
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tway.

Ye wote yourself wel how that ye came here
Into this hous, it is not long ago,
And though to me ye be right lefe and dere,

[1] A little while.

Unto my gentils ye be nothing so:
They say, to hem it is gret shame and wo
For to be suggetes, and ben in servage
To thee, that borne art of a smal linage.

And namely sin thy doughter was ybore,
Thise wordes han they spoken douteles,
But I desire, as I have don before,
To live my lif with hem in rest and pees:
I may not in this cas be reccheles;
I mote do with thy doughter for the best,
Not as I wold, but as my gentils lest.

And yet, God wote, this is ful loth to me:
But natheles withouten youre weting[1]
I wol nought do, but thus wol I (quod he)
That ye to me assenten in this thing.
Shew now youre patience in youre werking,
That ye me hight and swore in youre village
The day that maked was our mariage.

Whan she had herd all this, she not ameved[2]
Neyther in word, in chere, ne countenance,
(For as it semed, she was not agreved)
She sayde: Lord, all lith in your plesance,
My child and I, with hertely obeisance
Ben youres all, and ye may save or spill,
Your owen thing: werketh after your will.

Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,
Like unto you, that may displesen me:
Ne I desire nothing for to have,
Ne drede for to lese, sauf only ye:
This will is in myn herte, and ay shal be,
No length of time, or deth may this deface,
Ne change my corage to an other place.

Glad was this markis for hire answering,
But yet he feined as he were not so,
Al drery was his chere and his loking,
Whan that he shuld out of the chambre go.
Sone after this, a furlong way or two,
He prively hath told all his entent
Unto a man, and to his wif him sent.

[1] Knowledge. [2] Moved.

A maner sergeant was this prive man,
The which he faithful often founden had
In thinges gret, and eke swiche folk wel can
Don execution on thinges bad:
The lord knew wel, that he him loved and drad.
And whan this sergeant wist his lordes will,
Into the chambre he stalked him ful still.

Madame, he sayd, ye mote foryeve it me,
Though I do thing, to which I am constreined:
Ye ben so wise, that right wel knowen ye,
That lordes hestes may not ben yfeined,[1]
They may wel be bewailed and complained,
But men mote nedes to hir lust obey,
And so wol I, ther n'is no more to say.

This child I am commanded for to take.
And spake no more, but out the child he hent
Despitously, and gan a chere to make,[2]
As though he wold have slain it, or he went.
Grisildis most al suffer and al consent:
And as a lambe, she sitteth meke and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.

Suspecious was the diffame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the time in which he this began:
Alas! hire doughter, that she loved so,
She wende he wold han slaien it right tho,
But natheles she neither wept ne siked,
Conforming hire to that the markis liked.

But at the last to speken she began,
And mekely she to the sergeant praid
(So as he was a worthy gentil man)
That she might kisse hire child, or that it deid:
And in hire barme[3] this litel child she leid,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blisse,
And lulled it, and after gan it kisse.

And thus she sayd in hire benigne vois:
Farewel, my child, I shal thee never see,
But sin I have thee marked with the crois,

[1] Shirked, done with a feigned zeal only.
[2] To affect a manner.
[3] Lap.

Of thilke fader yblessed mote thou be,
That for us died upon a crois of tree:
Thy soule, litel child, I him betake,[1]
For this night shalt thou dien for my sake.

I trow that to a norice[2] in this cas[3]
It had ben hard this routhe for to see:
Wel might a moder than han cried alas,
But natheles so sad stedfast was she,
That she endured all adversitee,
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
Have here agen your litel yonge mayde.

Goth now (quod she) and doth my lordes hest:
And o thing wold I pray you of your grace,
But if my lord forbade you at the lest,
Burieth this litel body in som place,
That bestes ne no briddes it to-race.
But he no word to that purpos wold say,
But toke the child and went upon his way.

This sergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Grisildes wordes and hire chere
He told him point for point, in short and plain,
And him presented with his doughter dere.
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos held he still,
As lordes don, whan they wol han hir will.

And bad this sergeant that he prively
Shulde this child ful softe wind and wrappe,
With alle circumstances tendrely,
And carry it in a cofre,[4] or in a lappe;[5]
But upon peine his hed of for to swappe[6]
That no man shulde know of his entent,
Ne whens he came, ne whider that he went;

But at Boloigne, unto his suster dere,
That thilke time of Pavie was countesse,
He shuld it take, and shew hire this matere,
Beseching hire to don hire besinesse
This child to fostren in all gentillesse,
And whos child that it was he bade hire hide
From every wight, for ought that may betide.

[1] Commend to him. [2] Nurse. [3] Matter.
[4] Chest. [5] The skirt of a garment. [6] Strike off.

This sergeant goth, and hath fulfilde this thing.
But to this marquis now retorne we;
For now goth he ful fast imagining,
If by his wives chere he mighte see,
Or by hire wordes apperceive, that she
Were changed, but he never coud hire finde,
But ever in on ylike sad and kinde.

As glad, as humble, as besy in service
And eke in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every maner wise;
Ne of hire doughter not a word spake she:
Non accident for non adversitee
Was seen in hire, ne never hire doughters name
Ne nevened[1] she, for ernest ne for game.

PARS QUARTA.

In this estat ther passed ben foure yere
Er she with childe was, but, as God wold,
A knave childe she bare by this Waltere
Ful gracious, and fair for to behold:
And whan that folk it to his fader told,
Not only he, but all his contree mery
Was for this childe, and God they thonke and hery.[2]

Whan it was two yere old, and from the brest
Departed of his norice[3], on a day
This markis caughte yet another lest[4]
To tempte his wif yet ofter, if he may.
O! nedeles was she tempted in assay.
But wedded men ne connen no mesure,
Whan that they finde a patient creature.

Wif, quod this markis, ye han herd or this
My peple sikely beren our mariage,
And namely sin my sone yboren is,
Now is it werse than ever in al our age:
The murmur sleth myn herte and my corage,
For to myn eres cometh the vois so smerte,
That it wel nie destroyed hath myn herte.

[1] Named. [2] Praise. [3] Nurse. [4] Desire.

Now say they thus, whan Walter is agon,
Than shal the blood of Janicle succede,
And ben our lord, for other han we non:
Swiche wordes sayn my peple, it is no drede,[1]
Wel ought I of swiche murmur taken hede,
For certainly I drede al swiche sentence,
Though they not plainen[2] in myn audience.

I wolde live in pees, if that I might:
Wherfore I am disposed utterly,
As I his suster served er by night,
Right so thinke I to serve him prively.
This warne I you, that ye not sodenly
Out of yourself for no wo shuld outraie,[3]
Beth patient, and therof I you praie.

I have, quod she, sayd thus and ever shal,
I wol no thing, ne n'ill no thing certain,
But as you list: not greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slain
At your commandement: that is to sain,
I have not had no part of children twein,
But first sikenesse, and after wo and peine.

Ye ben my lord, doth with your owen thing
Right as you list, asketh no rede of me:
For as I left at home al my clothing
Whan I came first to you, right so (quod she)
Left I my will and al my libertee,
And toke your clothing: wherfore I you prey,
Doth your plesance, I wol youre lust obey.

And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your will to know, er ye your lust me told,
I wold it do withouten negligence:
But now I wote your lust, and what ye wold,
All your plesance ferme and stable I hold,
For wist I that my deth might do you ese,
Right gladly wold I dien, you to plese.

Deth may not maken no comparisoun
Unto your love. And whan this markis say
The constance of his wif, he cast adoun

[1] Doubt. [2] Complain. [3] Fly out, display passion.

His eyen two, and wondreth how she may
In patience suffer al this array:
And forth he goth with drery contenance,
But to his herte it was ful gret plesance.

This ugly sergeant in the same wise
That he hire doughter caughte, right so he
(Or werse, if men can any werse devise)
Hath hent[1] hire sone, that ful was of beautee:
And ever in on so patient was she,
That she no chere[2] made of hevinesse,
But kist hire sone and after gan it blesse.

Save this she praied him, if that he might,
Hire litel sone he wold in erthe grave,
His tendre limmes, delicat to sight,
Fro foules and fro bestes for to save.
But she non answer of him mighte have,
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it brought.

This markis wondreth ever lenger the more
Upon hire patience, and if that he
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbefore,
That parfitly hire children loved she,
He wold han wend that of som subtiltee
And of malice, or for cruel corage,
That she had suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew, that next himself, certain
She loved hire children best in every wise.
But now of women wold I asken fayn,
If thise assaies mighten not suffise;
What coud a sturdy husbond more devise
To preve hire wifhood, and hire stedfastnesse,
And he continuing ever in sturdinesse?

But ther ben folk of swiche condition,
That, whan they han a certain purpos take,
They can not stint of hir intention,
But, right as they were bounden to a stake,
They wol not of hir firste purpos slake:
Right so this markis fully hath purposed
To tempt his wif, as he was first disposed.

[1] Taken. [2] Show.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance
That she to him was changed of corage:
But never coud he finden variance,
She was ay on in herte and in visage,
And ay the further that she was in age,
The more trewe (if that it were possible)
She was to him in love, and more penible.[1]

For which it semed thus, that of hem two
Ther was but o will; for as Walter lest,
The same lust was hire plesance also;
And God be thanked, all fell for the best.
She shewed wel, for no worldly unrest
A wif, as of hireself, no thing ne sholde
Wille in effect, but as hire husbond wolde.

The sclandre[2] of Walter wonder wide spradde,
That of a cruel herte he wikkedly,
For he a poure woman wedded hadde,
Hath murdred both his children prively:
Swich murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is: for to the peples ere
Ther came no word, but that they murdred were.

For which ther as his peple therbefore
Had loved him wel, the sclandre of his diffame
Made hem that they him hateden therfore:
To ben a murdrour is an hateful name.
But natheles, for ernest ne for game,
He of his cruel purpos n'olde stente,
To tempt his wif was sette all his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yere was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in subtil wise
Enformed of his will, sent his message,
Commanding him, swiche billes to devise,
As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
How that the pope, as for his peples rest,
Bade him to wed another, if him lest.

I say he bade, they shulden contrefete
The popes bulles, making mention
That he hath leve his firste wif to lete,

[1] Painstaking. [2] Slander.

As by the popes dispensation,
To stinten rancour and dissension
Betwix his peple and him: thus spake the bull,
The which they han publisshed at the full.

The rude peple, as no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel, that it had ben right so:
But whan thise tidings came to Grisildis,
I deme that hire herte was ful of wo;
But she ylike sad for evermo
Disposed was, this humble creature,
The adversitee of fortune al to endure;

Abiding ever his lust and his plesance.
To whom that she was yeven, herte and al,
As to hire veray worldly suffisance.
But shortly if this storie tell I shal,
This markis writen hath in special
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,
And secretly he to Boloigne it sente,

To the erl of Pavie, which that hadde tho
Wedded his suster, prayed he specially
To bringen home agein his children two
In honourable estat al openly:
But o thing he him prayed utterly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquere,
Shulde not tell whos children that they were,

But say, the maiden shuld ywedded be
Unto the markis of Saluces anon.
And as this erl was prayed, so did he,
For at day sette he on his way is gon
Toward Saluces, and lordes many on
In rich arraie, this maiden for to gide,
Hire yonge brother riding hire beside.

Arraied was toward hire mariage
This fresshe maiden, ful of gemmes clere,
Hire brother, which that seven yere was of age,
Arraied eke ful fresh in his manere:
And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
Toward Saluces shaping hir journay
Fro day to day they riden in hir way.

PARS QUINTA.

Among al this, after his wicked usage,
This markis yet his wif to tempten more
To the uttereste prefe of hire corage,
Fully to have experience and lore,
If that she were as stedefast as before,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boistously hath said hire this sentence:

Certes, Grisilde, I had ynough plesance
To han you to my wif, for your goodnesse,
And for your trouthe, and for your obeysance,
Not for your linage, ne for your richesse,
But now know I in veray sothfastnesse,[1]
That in gret lordship, if I me wel avise,
Ther is gret servitude in sondry wise.

I may not don, as every ploughman may:
My peple me constreineth for to take
Another wif, and crien day by day;
And eke the pope rancour for to slake[2]
Consenteth it, that dare I undertake:
And trewely, thus moche I wol you say,
My newe wif is coming by the way.

Be strong of herte, and voide[3] anon hire place,
And thilke dower that ye broughten me
Take it agen, I grant it of my grace.
Returneth to your fadres hous, (quod he)
No man may alway have prosperitee.
With even herte I rede[4] you to endure
The stroke of fortune, or of aventure.

And she agen answerd in patience:
My lord, quod she, I wote, and wist alway,
How that betwixen your magnificence
And my poverte no wight ne can ne may
Maken comparison, it is no nay;
I ne held me never digne in no manere
To be your wif, ne yet your chamberere.[5]

[1] Truth. [2] Allay.
[3] Give up. [4] Advise. [5] Chamber maid.

And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witnesse,
And all so wisly[1] he my soule glad)
I never held me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servant to your worthinesse,
And ever shal, while that my lif may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye so longe of your benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobley,
Wheras I was not worthy for to be,
That thanke I God and you, to whom I prey
Foryelde[2] it you, ther is no more to sey:
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with him dwell unto my lives ende;

Ther I was fostred of a childe ful smal,
Til I be ded my lif ther wol I lede,
A widew clene in body, herte and al.
For sith I yave to you my maidenhede,
And am your trewe wif, it is no drede,
God shilde swiche a lordes wif to take
Another man to husbond or to make.

And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte you wele and prosperite:
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For sith it liketh you, my lord, (quod she)
That whilom weren all myn hertes rest,
That I shal gon, I wol go whan you lest.

But ther as ye me profre swiche dowaire
As I first brought, it is wel in my mind,
It were my wretched clothes, nothing faire,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goode God! how gentil and how kind
Ye semed by your speche and your visage,
The day that maked was oure marriage!

But soth is said, algate I find it trewe,
For in effect it preved is on me,
Love is not old, as whan that it is newe.

[1] Certainly, truly. [2] Repay.

But certes, lord, for non adversitee[1]
To dien in this cas, it shal not be
That ever in word or werke I shal repent,
That I you yave min herte in hole entent.

My lord, ye wote, that in my fadres place
Ye dide me stripe out of my poure wede,
And richely ye clad me of your grace;
To you brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakednesse, and maidenhede;
And here agen your clothing I restore,
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

The remenant of your jeweles redy be
Within your chambre, I dare it safly sain;
Naked out of my fadres hous (quod she)
I came, and naked I mote turne again.
All your plesance wolde I folwe fain:
But yet I hope it be not your entent,
That I smokles out of your paleis went.

Ye coude not do so dishonest a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children lay,
Shulde before the peple, in my walking,
Be seen al bare: wherfore I you pray
Let me not like a worme go by the way:
Remembre you, min owen lord so dere,
I was your wif, though I unworthy were.

Wherfore in guerdon of my maidenhede,
Which that I brought and not agen I bere,
As vouchesauf to yeve me to my mede
But swiche a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrie[2] the wombe of hire
That was your wif: and here I take my leve
Of you, min owen lord, lest I you greve.

The smok, quod he, that thou hast on thy bake,
Let it be still, and bere it forth with thee.
But wel unnethes[3] thilke word he spake,
But went his way for routhe and for pitee.
Before the folk hireselven stripeth she,
And in hire smok, with foot and hed al bare,
Toward hire fadres hous forth is she fare.

[1] For it were no adversity.
[2] Cover.
[3] Right uneasily.

The folk hire folwen weping in hir wey,
And fortune ay they cursen as they gon:
But she fro weping kept hire eyen drey,
Ne in this time word ne spake she non.
Hire fader, that this tiding herd anon,
Curseth the day and time, that nature
Shope him to ben a lives creature.

For out of doute this olde poure man
Was ever in suspect of hire mariage:
For ever he demed, sin it first began,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corage,
Him wolde thinke it were a disparage
To his estat, so lowe for to alight,
And voiden hire as sone as ever he might.

Agein his doughter hastily goth he,
(For he by noise of folk knew hire coming)
And with hire olde cote, as it might be,
He covereth hire ful sorwefully weping:
But on hire body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By daies fele[1] than at hire mariage.

Thus with hire fader for a certain space
Dwelleth this flour of wifly[2] patience,
That nother by hire wordes ne hire face,
Beforn the folk, ne eke in hir absence,
Ne shewed she that hire was don offence,
Ne of hire high estat no remembrance
Ne hadde she, as by hire contenance.

No wonder is, for in hire gret estat
Hire gost was ever in pleine humilitee;
No tendre mouth, no herte delicat,
No pompe, no semblant of realtee;
But ful of patient benignitee,
Discrete, and prideles, ay honourable,
And to hire husbond ever meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem list, can wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse,

[1] Many. [2] True.

Though clerkes preisen women but a lite,
Ther can no man in humblesse him acquite
As woman can, ne can be half so trewe
As women ben, but it be falle of newe.

PARS SEXTA.

Fro Boloigne is this erl of Pavie come,
Of which the fame up sprang to more and lesse:
And to the peples eres all and some
Was couth[1] eke, that a newe markisesse
He with him brought, in swiche pomp and richesse,
That never was ther seen with mannes eye
So noble array in al West Lumbardie.

The markis, which that shope[2] and knew all this,
Er that this erl was come, sent his message
For thilke poure sely Grisildis;
And she with humble herte and glad visage,
Not with no swollen thought in hire corage,
Came at his hest, and on hire knees hire sette,
And reverently and wisely she him grette.

Grisilde, (quod he) my will is utterly,
This maiden, that shal wedded be to me,
Received be to-morwe as really
As it possible is in myn hous to be:
And eke that every wight in his degree
Have his estat in sitting and service,
And high plesance, as I can best devise.

I have no woman suffisant certain
The chambres for to array in ordinance
After my lust, and therfore wolde I fain,
That thin were all swiche manere governance:
Thou knowest eke of old all my plesance;
Though thin array be bad, and evil besey,
Do thou thy devoir at the leste wey.

Not only, lord, that I am glad (quod she)
To don your lust, but I desire also
You for to serve and plese in my degree,

[1] Known. [2] Shaped, devised.

Withouten fainting, and shal evermo:
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne shal the gost within myn herte stente
To love you best with all my trewe entente.

And with that word she gan the hous to dight,[1]
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peined hire to don all that she might,
Praying the chambereres for Goddes sake
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and shake,
And she the moste serviceable of all
Hath every chambre arraied, and his hall.

Abouten undern[2] gan this erl alight,
That with him brought thise noble children twey;
For which the peple ran to see the sight
Of hir array, so richely besey:
And than at erst amonges hem they sey,
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest
To change his wif; for it was for the best.

For she is fairer, as they demen all,
Than is Grisilde, and more tendre of age,
And fairer fruit betwene hem shulde fall,
And more plesant for hire high linage:
Hire brother eke so faire was of visage,
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesance,
Commending now the markis governance.

O stormy peple, unsad and ever untrewe,
And undiscrete, and changing as a fane,[3]
Delighting ever in rombel[4] that is newe,
For like the mone waxen ye and wane:
Ay ful of clapping, dere ynough a jane,[5]
Your dome[6] is fals, your constance evil preveth,
A ful gret fool is he that on you leveth.[7]

Thus saiden sade folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gased up and doun:
For they were glad, right for the noveltee,

[1] Decorate. [2] Nine o'clock. [3] Vane, weathercock.
[4] Rumour. [5] A small coin, properly of Janua, *i. e.*, Genoa.
[6] Judgment. [7] Believeth.

To have a newe lady of hir toun.
No more of this make I now mentioun,
But to Grisilde agen I wol me dresse,
And telle hire constance, and hire besinesse

Ful besy was Grisilde in every thing,
That to the feste was appertinent;
Right naught was she abaist[1] of hire clothing,
Though it were rude, and somdel eke to-rent,
But with glad chere to the yate[2] is went
With other folk, to grete the markisesse,
And after that doth forth hire besinesse.

With so glad chere his gestes she receiveth,
And conningly everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man apperceiveth,
But ay they wondren what she mighte be,
That in so poure array was for to see,
And coude[3] swiche honour and reverence,
And worthily they preisen hire prudence.

In all this mene while she ne stent
This maide and eke hire brother to commend
With all hire herte in ful benigne entent,
So wel, that no man coud hire preise amend:
But at the last whan that thise lordes wend
To sitten doun to mete, he gan to call
Grisilde, as she was besy in the hall.

Grisilde, (quod he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wif, and hire beautee?
Right wel, my lord, quod she, for in good fay,
A fairer saw I never non than she:
I pray to God yeve you prosperitee;
And so I hope, that he wol to you send
Plesance ynough unto your lives end.

O thing beseche I you and warne also,
That ye ne prikke with no turmenting
This tendre maiden as ye han do mo:[4]

[1] Ashamed. [2] Gate.
[3] Understood. [4] Me.

For she is fostred in hire norishing
More tendrely, and to my supposing
She mighte not adversitee endure,
As coude a poure[1] fostred creature.

And whan this Walter saw hire patience,
Hire glade chere, and no malice at all,
And he so often hadde hire don offence,
And she ay sade and constant as a wall,
Continuing ever hire innocence over all,
This sturdy markis gan his herte dresse
To rewe[2] upon hire wifly stedefastnesse.

This is ynough, Grisilde min, quod he,
Be now no more agast, ne evil apaid,
I have thy faith and thy benignitee,
As wel as ever woman was, assaid[3]
In[4] gret estat, and pourelich arraied:
Now know I, dere wif, thy stedefastnesse,
And hire in armes toke, and gan to kesse.

And she for wonder toke of it no kepe;[5]
She herde not what thing he to hire said:
She ferde[6] as she had stert out of a slepe,
Til she out of hire masednesse[7] abraid.
Grisilde, quod he, by God that for us deid,
Thou art my wif, non other I ne have,
Ne never had, as God my soule save.

This is thy doughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Shal be min heir, as I have ay disposed;
Thou bare hem of thy body trewely:
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively:
Take hem agen, for now maist thou not say,
That thou hast lorn non of thy children tway.

And folk, that otherwise han said of me,
I warne hem wel, that I have don this dede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for to assay in thee thy womanhede:
And not to slee my children (God forbede)

[1] Poorly. [2] Address to pity. [3] Tested.
[4] In. [5] Heed. [6] Feared. [7] Surprise.

But for to kepe hem prively and still,
Til I thy purpos knew, and all thy will.

Whan she this herd aswoune doun she falleth
For pitous joye, and after hire swouning
She both hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes pitously weping
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissing
Ful like a moder with hire salte teres
She bathed both hir visage and hir heres.

O, which a pitous thing it was to see
Hire swouning, and hire humble vois to here!
Grand mercy, lord, God thank it you (quod she)
That ye han saved me my children dere:
Now rekke[1] I never to be ded right here,
Sin I stond in your love, and in your grace,
No force of deth, ne whan my spirit pace.

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children mine,
Your woful mother wened[2] stedfastly,
That cruel houndes, or som foul vermine
Had eten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tendrely
Hath don you kepe: and in that same stound[3]
Al sodenly she swapt[4] adoun to ground.

And in hire swough[5] so sadly holdeth she
Hire children two, whan she gan hem embrace,
That with gret sleight and gret difficultee
The children from hire arm they gan arrace
O! many a tere on many a pitous face
Doun ran of hem that stoden hire beside,
Unnethe abouten hire might they abide.

Walter hire gladeth,[6] and hire sorwe slaketh,
She riseth up abashed from hire trance,
And every wight hire joye and feste maketh,
Til she hath caught agen hire contenance.
Walter hire doth so faithfully plesance,
That it was deintee for to seen the chere
Betwix hem two, sin they ben met in fere.[7]

[1] Care. [2] Thought,
[3] Moment. [4] Fell. [5] Swoon.
[6] Gladdeneth. [7] Together.

Thise ladies, whan that they hir[1] time sey,
Han taken hire, and into chambre gon,
And stripen hire out of hire rude arrey,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte shone,
With a coroune of many a riche stone
Upon hire hed, they into hall hire broughte:
And ther she was honoured as hire ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful end;
For every man, and woman, doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to dispend,
Til on the welkin[2] shone the sterres bright:
For more solempne in every mannes sight
This feste was, and greter of costage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yere in high prosperitee
Liven thise two in concord and in rest,
And richely his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest
Of all Itaille, and than in pees and rest
His wives fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

His sone succedeth in his heritage,
In rest and pees, after his fadres day:
And fortunat was eke in mariage,
Al[3] put he not his wif in gret assay:
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde times yore,
And herkneth, what this auctour saith therfore.

This story is said, not for that wives shuld
Folwe Grisilde, as in humilitee,
For it were importable,[4] tho they wold;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shulde be constant in adversitee,
As was Grisilde, therfore Petrark writeth
This storie, which with high stile he enditeth.

For sith a woman was so patient
Unto a mortal man, wel more we ought
Receiven all in gree[5] that God us sent.

[1] Their. [2] Heaven. [3] Although.
[4] Unbearable. [5] Grace.

For gret skill is he preve that he wrought
But he ne tempteth no man that he bought
As saith seint Jame, if ye his pistell[1] rede;
He preveth folk al day, it is no drede:

And suffreth us, as for our exercise,
With sharpe scourges of adversitee
Ful often to be bete in sondry wise;
Not for to know our will, for certes he
Or we were borne, knew all our freeletee;[2]
And for our best is all his governance;
Let us than live in vertuous suffrance.

But o[3] word, lordings, herkeneth, or I go:
It were ful hard to finden now adayes
In all a toun Grisildes three or two:
For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so bad alayes[4]
With bras, that though the coine be faire at eye,
It wolde rather brast atwo[5] than plie.[6]

For which here, for the wives love of Bathe,
Whos lif and al hire secte God maintene
In high maistrie, and elles were it scathe,
I wol with lusty herte fresshe and grene,
Say you a song to gladen you, I wene:
And let us stint of[7] ernestful matere.
Herkneth my song, that saith in this manere.

Grisilde is ded, and eke hire patience,
And both at ones buried in Itaille:
For which I crie in open audience,
No wedded man so hardy be to assaille
His wives patience, in trust[8] to find
Grisildes, for in certain he shal faille.

O noble wives, ful of high prudence,
Let non humilitee your tonges naile:
Ne let no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of you a storie of swiche mervaille,

[1] Epistle. [2] Frailty.
[3] One. [4] Alloys. [5] Burst in two.
[6] Yield. [7] Cease from. [8] In hopes.

As of Grisildis patient and kinde,
Lest Chichevache[1] you swalwe in hire entraille.

Folweth ecco,[2] that holdeth no silence,
But ever answereth at the countretaille:[3]
Beth not bedaffed[4] for your innocence,
But sharply taketh on you the governaille:
Emprenteth wel this lesson in your minde,
For comun profit, sith it may availle.

Ye archewives, stondeth ay at defence,
Sin ye be strong, as is a gret camaille,[5]
Ne suffreth not, that men do you offence.
And sclendre wives, feble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tigre yond in Inde;
Ay clappeth[6] as a mill, I you counsaille.

Ne drede hem not, doth hem no reverence,
For though thin husbond armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his brest, and eke his aventaille:[7]
In jalousie I rede eke thou him binde,
And thou shalt make him couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be faire, ther[8] folk ben in presence
Shew thou thy visage, and thin apparaille:
If thou be foule, be free of thy dispence,
To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille:

[1] This excellent reading is restored upon the authority of the best MSS. instead of the common one, *Chechiface*. The allusion is to the subject of an old ballad, which is still preserved in MS. *Harl.* 2251. fol. 270. b. It is a kind of pageant, in which two beasts are introduced, called *Bycorne* and *Chichevache*. The first is supposed to feed upon *obedient husbands*, and the other upon *patient wives*; and the humour of the piece consists in representing *Bicorne* as pampered with a superfluity of food, and *Chichevache* as half starved.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Echo. [3] A tally, answering exactly to the other.

[4] Fooled. [5] Camel. [6] Talk, rattle.

[7] *The forepart of the armour.* Sk. He deduces it from *avant*. But *ventaille* was the common name for that aperture in a close helmet through which the wearer was to breathe, Nicot, in v.; so that perhaps *ventaille* meant originally an helmet with such an aperture; *un heaume à ventaille*.

[8] Where.

Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
And let him care, and wepe, and wringe, and waille.[1]

[1] Tyrwhitt has the following remarks, which deserve notice: Beside the MSS. C. I. Ask. I. 2, and others, we have the authority of both Caxton's Editt. for concluding the *Clerkes* Tale in this manner. I say nothing of the two Editt. by Pynson, as they are mere copies of Caxton's second. But I must not conceal a circumstance, which seems to contradict the supposition that the *Marchant's* Prologue followed immediately. In those same MSS. the following stanza is interposed:—

This worthy Clerk whan ended was his tale,
Our Hoste saide and swore by cockes bones,
Me were lever than a barrel of ale
My wif at home had herd this legend ones;
This is a gentil tale for the nones,
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille,
But thing that wol not be, let it be stille.

Whatever may be thought of the genuineness of these lines, they can at best, in my opinion, be considered as a fragment of an *unfinished* Prologue, which Chaucer might *once* have intended to place at the end of the *Clerkes* tale. When he determined to connect that tale with the *Marchant's* in another manner, he may be supposed, notwithstanding, to have left this Stanza for the present uncancelled in his MS. He has made use of the thought, and some of the lines, in the Prologue which connects the *Monkes* Tale with *Melibee*, ver. 13895—13900.

THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

9089–9120.

Weping and wailing, care and other sorwe
I have ynough, on even and on morwe,
Quod the marchant, and so have other mo,
That wedded ben; I trowe that it be so:
For wel I wot it fareth so by me.
I have a wif, the werste that may be,
For though the fend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde him overmatche I dare wel swere.
What shulde I you reherse in special
Hire high malice? she is a shrew at al.[1]
Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Grisildes grete patience,
And of my wif the passing crueltee.
Were I unbounden, all so mote I the,
I wolde never eft[2] comen in the snare.
We wedded men live in sorwe and care,
Assay it who so wol, and he shal finde
That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I say not alle;
God shilde that it shulde so befalle.
A, good sire hoste, I have ywedded be
Thise monethes two, and more not parde;
And yet I trowe that he, that all his lif
Wifes hath ben, though that men wolde him rife[3]
Into the herte, ne coude in no manere
Tellen so much sorwe, as I you here
Coud tellen of my wives cursednesse.
Now, quod our hoste, marchant, so God you blesse,
Sin ye so mochel knowen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray you tell us part.
Gladly, quod he, but of min owen sore
For sory herte I tellen may no more.

[1] In all respects. [2] Again. [3] Thrust through, stab.

The Marchantes Tale.

9121–9152.

Whilom ther was dwelling in Lumbardie
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie
In which he lived in gret prosperitee;
And sixty yere a wifles man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delit
On women, ther as was his appetit,
As don thise fooles that ben seculere.
And whan that he was passed sixty yere,
Were it for holinesse or for dotage,
I cannot sain, but swiche a gret corage
Hadde this knight to ben a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
To espien, wher that he might wedded be;
Praying our lord to granten him, that he
Mighte ones knowen of that blisful lit,
That is betwix an husbond and his wif,
And for to live under that holy bond,
With which God firste man and woman bond.
Non other lif (said he) is worth a bene:
For wedlok is so esy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradise.
Thus saith this olde knight, that was so wise.
And certainly, as soth as God is king,
To take a wif, it is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hore,[1]
Than is a wif the fruit of his tresore;
Than shuld he take a yong wif and a faire,
On which he might engendren him an heire
And lede his lif in joye and in solas,
Wheras thise bachelers singen alas,
Whan that they finde any adversitee
In love, which n'is but childish vanitee.

[1] Hoary, grey.

And trewely it sit wel to be so,
That bachelers have often peine and wo:
On brotel ground they bilde, and brotelnesse
They finden, whan they wenen[1] sikernesse:
They live but as a bird or as a beste,
In libertee and under non areste,
Ther as a wedded man in his estat
Liveth a lif blisful and ordinat,
Under the yoke of mariage ybound:
Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abound.
For who can be so buxom[2] as a wif?
Who is so trewe and eke so ententif
To kepe him, sike and hole,[3] as is his make?[4]
For wele or wo she n'ill him not forsake:
She n'is not wery him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrede[5] til that he sterve.[6]
And yet som clerkes sain, it is not so,
Of which he Theophrast is on of tho:
What force though Theophrast list for to lie?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for husbondrie,
As for to spare in houshold thy dispence:
A trewe servant doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than doth thin owen wif,
For she wol claimen half part al hire lif.
And if that thou be sike, so God me save,
Thy veray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe thee bet than she, that waiteth ay
After thy good, and hath don many a day.
This sentence, and an hundred things werse
Writeth this man ther God his bones curse.
But take no kepe of al swiche vanitee,
Defieth Theophrast, and herkeneth me.
A wif is Goddes yefte veraily;
All other maner yeftes hardely,
As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,[7]
Or mebles,[8] all ben yeftes of fortune,
That passen as a shadow on the wall:
But drede[9] thou not, if plainly speke I shal,
A wif wol last and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than thee list paraventure.

[1] Suppose. [2] Obedient, faithful. [3] Ill or well.
[4] Mate. [5] Bedridden. [6] Die.
[7] Common-land, I suppose. [8] Moveables. [9] Doubt.

Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;
He which that hath no wif I hold him shent;[1]
He liveth helples, and all desolat:
(I speke of folk in secular estat)
And herkneth why, I say not this for nought,
That woman is for mannes helpe ywrought.
The highe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And saw him al alone belly naked,
God of his grete goodnesse saide than,
Let us now make an helpe unto this man
Like to himself, and than he made him Eve.
Here may ye see, and hereby may ye preve,
That a wif is mannes helpe and his comfort,
His paradis terrestre and his disport:
So buxom and so vertuous is she,
They mosten nedes live in unitee:
O flesh they ben, and o flesh, as I gesse,
Hath but on herte in wele and in distresse.
A wif? a! seinte Marie, *benedicite*,
How might a man have any adversite
That hath a wif? certes I cannot seye.
The blisse the which that is betwix hem tweye
Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be poure, she helpeth him to swinke;
She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a del;
All that hire husbond doth, hire liketh wel;
She saith not ones nay, whan he saith ye;
Do this, saith he; al redy, sire, saith she.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious,
Thou art so mery, and eke so vertuous,
And so commended, and approved eke,
That every man that holt[2] him worth a leke,
Upon his bare knees ought all his lif
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
Or elles pray to God him for to send
A wif, to last unto his lives end.
For than his lif is set in sikernesse,[3]
He may not be deceived, as I gesse,
So that he werche after his wives rede;
Than may he boldly beren up his hede,
They ben so trewe, and therwithal so wise.
For which, if thou wilt werchen as the wise,

[1] Ruined. [2] Holds. [3] Security.

Do alway so, as women wol thee rede.
Lo how that Jacob, as thise clerkes rede,
By good conseil of his mother Rebekke
Bounde the kiddes skin about his nekke;
For which his fadres benison he wan.
Lo Judith, as the storie eke tell can,
By good conseil she Goddes peple kept,
And slow him Holofernes while he slept.
Lo Abigail, by good conseil how she
Saved hire husbond Nabal, whan that he
Shuld han be slain. And loke, Hester also
By good conseil delivered out of wo
The peple of God, and made him Mardochee
Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.
Ther n'is no thing in gree superlatit
(As saith Senek) above an humble wif.
Suffer thy wives tonge, as Caton bit,[1]
She shal command, and thou shalt suffren it,
And yet she wol obey of curtesie.
A wif is keper of thin husbondrie:
Wel may the sike man bewaile and wepe,
Ther as ther is[2] no wif the hous to kepe.
I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt werche,
Love wel thy wif, as Crist loveth his cherche:
If thou lovest thyself, love thou thy wif.
No man hateth his flesh, but in his lif
He fostreth it, and therfore bid I thee
Cherish thy wif, or thou shalt never the.[3]
Husbond and wif, what so men jape or play,
Of worldly folk holden the siker way:
They ben so knit, ther[4] may non harm betide,
And namely upon the wives side.
For which this January, of whom I told,
Considered hath within his dayes old
The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage hony-swete.
And for his frendes on a day he sent
To tellen hem th' effect of his entent.
With face sad, his tale he hath hem told:
He sayde, frendes, I am hore and old,

[1] Biddeth, cf. Cato, Distich. iii. 25. "Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento."
[2] *I. e.*, where there is. [3] Thrive. [4] Them.

And almost (God wot) on my pittes brinke,
Upon my soule somwhat most I thinke.
I have my body folily[1] dispended,
Blessed be God that it shal ben amended:
For I wol ben certain a wedded man,
And that anon in all the hast I can.
Unto som maiden, faire and tendre of age,
I pray you shapeth for my mariage
All sodenly, for I wol not abide:
And I wol fonde[2] to espien on my side,
To whom I may be wedded hastily.
But for as moche as ye ben more than I,
Ye shullen rather swiche a thing espien
Than I, and wher me beste were to allien.
But o thing warn I you, my frendes dere,
I wol non old wif han in no manere:
She shal not passen twenty yere certain.
Old fish and yonge flesh wold I have fain.
Bet is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,
And bet than old beef is the tendre veel.
I wol no woman thirty yere of age,
It is but benestraw and gret forage.
And eke thise olde widewes (God it wote)
They connen so moch craft on Wades bote,[3]
So mochel broken harm whan that hem lest,
That with hem shuld I never live in rest.
For sondry scoles maken subtil clerkes;
Woman of many scoles half a clerk is.
But certainly, a yong thing men may gie,
Right as men may warm wax with handes plie,[4]
Wherfore I say you plainly in a clause,
I wol non old wif han right for this cause.
For if so were I hadde swiche meschance,
That I in hire ne coude have no plesance,
Than shuld I lede my lif in avoutrie,[5]
And so streight to the devil whan I die.
Ne children shuld I non upon hire geten:
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that min heritage shulde fall
In straunge hondes: and this I tell you all.

[1] Foolishly. [2] Try.

[3] *Troilus and Cress.* iii. 615, the words "a tale of Wade" are put to denote some romantic history. Tyrwhitt confesses he cannot explain the present allusion.

[4] Bending, moulding. [5] Adultery.

I dote not, I wot the cause why
Men shulden wedde: and furthermore wot I,
Ther speketh many a man of mariage,
That wot no more of it than wot my page,
For which causes a man shuld take a wif.
If he ne may not liven chast his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devotion,
Because of leful procreation
Of children, to the honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they shulden lecherie eschue,
And yeld hir dette whan that it is due:
Or for that eche of hem shuld helpen other
In meschefe, as a suster shal the brother,
And live in chastitee ful holily.
But, sires, (by your leve) that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,
I fele my limmes stark and suffisant
To don all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myselven best what I may do.
Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tre,
That blosmeth er the fruit ywoxen be;
The blosmy tre n'is neither drie ne ded:
I fele me no wher hoor but on my hed.
Min herte and all my limmes ben as grene,
As laurer thurgh the yere is for to sene.
And sin that ye han herd all min entent,
I pray you to my will ye wolde assent.
Diverse men diversely him told
Of mariage many ensamples old;
Som blamed it, som praised it certain;
But atte laste, shortly for to sain,
(As all day falleth altercation
Betwixen frendes in disputison)
Ther fell a strif betwix his brethren two,
Of which that on was cleped Placebo,
Justinus sothly called was that other.
Placebo sayd; O January brother,
Ful litel nede han ye, my lord so dere,
Conseil to aske of any that is here:
But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
That you ne liketh for your high prudence,
To weiven[1] fro the word of Salomon.
This word sayd he unto us everich on;

[1] Depart.

Werke alle thing by conseil, thus sayd he,
And than ne shalt thou not repenten thee.
But though that Salomon spake swiche a word,
Min owen dere brother and my lord,
So wisly God my soule bringe at rest,
I hold your owen conseil is the best.
For, brother min, take of me this motif,
I have now ben a court-man all my lif,
And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have stonden in ful gret degree
Abouten lordes of ful high estat:
Yet had I never with non of hem debat,
I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it firme and stable,
I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
A ful gret fool is any conseillour,
That serveth any lord of high honour,
That dare presume, or ones thinken it,
That his conseil shuld passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye han yourselven shewed here to-day
So high sentence, so holily, and wel,
That I consent, and confirme every del
Your wordes all, and your opinioun.
By God ther n'is no man in all this toun
Ne in Itaille, coud bet han ysayd:
Crist holt him of this conseil wel apaid.
And trewely it is an high corage
Of any man that stopen is in age,
To take a young wif, by my fader kin:
Your herte hongeth on a joly pin.
Doth now in this matere right as you lest,
For finally I hold it for the best.
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herd,
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerd.
Now, brother min, be patient I pray,
Sin ye han said, and herkneth what I say.
Senek among his other wordes wise
Saith, that a man ought him right wel avise,
To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel,[1]
And sith I ought avisen me right wel,

[1] Goods.

To whom I yeve my good away fro me,
Wel more I ought avisen me, parde,
To whom I yeve my body: for alway
I warne you wel it is no childes play
To take a wif without avisement.
Men must enqueren (this is min assent)
Wheder she be wise and sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or elles other waies a shrew,
A chidester, or a wastour of thy good,
Or riche or poure, or elles a man is wood.
Al be it so, that no man finden shal
Non in this world, that trotteth hol[1] in al,
Ne man, ne beste, swiche as men can devise,
But natheles it ought ynough suffice
With any wif, if so were that she had
Mo goode thewes,[2] than hire vices bad:
And all this axeth leiser to enquere.
For God it wot, I have wept many a tere
Ful prively, sin that I had a wif.
Praise who so wol a wedded mannes lif,
Certain I find in it but cost and care,
And observances of alle blisses bare.
And yet, God wot, my neighebours aboute,
And namely[3] of women many a route,[4]
Sain that I have the moste stedefast wif,
And eke the mekest on that bereth lif.
But I wot best, wher wringeth[5] me my sho.
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.
Aviseth you, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage;
And namely with a yong wif and a faire.
By him that made water, fire, erthe, and aire,
The yongest man, that is in all this route,
Is besy ynow to bringen it aboute
To han his wif alone, trusteth me:
Ye shul not plesen hire fully yeres three,
This is to sain, to don hire ful plesance.
A wif axeth ful many an observance.
I pray you that ye be not evil apaid.
Wel, quod this January, and hast thou saide?
Straw for Senek, and straw for thy proverbes,
I counte not a panier ful of herbes

[1] Whole, sound. [2] Qualities.
[3] Especially. [4] Company. [5] Pinches.

Of scole termes; wiser men than thou,
As thou hast herd, assented here right now
To my purpos: Placebo, what saye ye?
I say it is a cursed man, quod he,
That letteth matrimoine sikerly.[1]
And with that word they risen sodenly,
And ben assented fully, that he sholde
Be wedded whan him list, and wher he wolde.
High fantasie and curious besinesse
Fro day to day gan in the soule empresse
Of January about his mariage.
Many a faire shap, and many a faire visage
Ther passeth thurgh his herte night by night.
As who so toke a mirrour polished bright,
And set it in a comune market place,
Than shuld he see many a figure pace
By his mirrour, and in the same wise
Gan January in with his thought devise
Of maidens, which that dwelten him beside:
He wiste not wher that he might abide.
For if that on have beautee in hire face,
Another stont so in the peples grace
For hire sadnesse[2] and hire benignitee,
That of the peple the gretest vois hath she:
And som were riche and hadden a bad name.
But natheles, betwix ernest and game,
He at the last appointed him on on,
And let all other from his herte gon,
And chees hire of his owen auctoritee,
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,
He purtreied in his herte and in his thought
Hire freshe beautee, and hire age tendre,
Hire middel smal, hire armes long and sclendre,
Hire wise governance, hire gentillesse,
Hire womanly bering, and hire sadnesse.
And whan that he on hire was condescended,
Him thought his chois it might not ben amended;
For whan that he himself concluded had,
Him thought eche other mannes wit so bad,
That impossible it were to replie
Again his chois; this was his fantasie.

[1] Entirely. [2] Seriousness.

His frendes sent he to, at his instance,
And praied hem to don him that plesance,
That hastily they wolden to him come;
He wolde abregge hir labour all and some:
Neded no more to hem to go ne ride,
He was appointed ther he wolde abide.
Placebo came, and eke his frendes sone,
And alderfirst he bade hem all a bone,[1]
That non of hem non argumentes make
Again the purpos that he hath ytake:
Which purpos was plesant to God (said he)
And veray ground of his prosperitee.
He said, ther was a maiden in the toun,
Which that of beautee hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, she were of smal degree,
Sufficeth him hire youth and hire beautee:
Which maid (he said) he wold han to his wif
To lede in ese and holinesse his lif:
And thanked God, that he might han hire all,
That no wight with his blisse parten shall:
And praied hem to labour in this nede,
And shapen that he faille not to spede.
For than, he sayd, his spirit was at ese;
Than is (quod he) nothing may me displese,
Save o thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I wol reherse in your presence.
I have (quod he) herd said ful yore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two,
This is to say, in erthe and eke in heven.
For though he kepe him fro the sinnes seven,
And eke from every branch of thilke tree,
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee,
And so gret ese and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast now in min age,
That I shal leden now so mery a lif,
So delicat, withouten wo or strif,
That I shal han min heven in erthe here.
For sin that veray heven is bought so dere
With tribulation and gret penance,
How shuld I than, living in swiche plesance
As alle wedded men don with hir wives,
Come to the blisse, ther Crist eterne on live is?

[1] Begged of them a boon.

This is my drede, and ye, my brethren tweie,
Assoileth[1] me this question I preie.
Justinus, which that hated his folie,
Answerd anon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrege,
He wolde non auctoritee allege,
But sayde, sire, so ther be non obstacle
Other than this, God of his hie miracle,
And of his mercy may so for you werche,
That er ye have your rights of holy cherche,
Ye may repent of wedded mannes lif,
In which ye sain ther is no wo ne strif:
And elles God forbede, but if he sent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Wel often, rather than a single man.
And therfore, sire, the best rede[2] that I can,
Despeire you not, but haveth in memorie,
Paraventure she may be your purgatorie;
She may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than shal your soule up unto heven skippe
Swifter than doth an arow of a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shal know,
That ther n'is non so gret felicitee
In mariage, ne never more shal be,
That you shal let of[3] your salvation,
So that ye use, as skill is and reson,
The lustes of your wif attemprely,
And that ye plese hire nat to amorously:
And that ye kepe you eke from other sinne.
My tale is don, for my wit is but thinne.
Beth not agast hereof, my brother dere,
But let us waden out of this matere.
The wif of Bathe, if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye now han in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space:
Fareth now wel, God have you in his grace.
And with this word this Justine and his brother
Han take hir leve, and eche of hem of other.
And whan they saw that it must nedes be,
They wroughten so by sleighte and wise tretee,
That she this maiden, which that Maius hight,
As hastily as ever that she might,

[1] Absolve, answer. [2] Advise. [3] Lose.

Shal wedded be unto this January.
I trow it were to longe you to tary,
If I you told of every script and bond,
By which that she was feoffed[1] in his lond;
Or for to rekken of hire rich array.
But finally ycomen is the day,
That to the chirche bothe ben they went,
For to receive the holy sacrament.
Forth cometh the preest, with stole about his nekke
And bade hire be like Sara and Rebekke,
In wisdome and in trouthe of mariage:
And sayd his orisons, as is usage,
And crouched[2] hem, and bade God shuld hem blesse,
And make all siker[3] ynow with holinesse.
Thus ben they wedded with solempnitee:
And at the feste sitteth he and she
With other worthy folk upon the deis.[4]
Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleis,
And ful of instruments, and of vitaille,
The moste deinteous of all Itaille.
Beforn hem stood swiche instruments of soun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,
Ne maden never swiche a melodie.
At every cours in came loude minstralcie,
That never Joab tromped for to here,
Ne he[5] Theodomas yet half so clere
At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.
Bacchus the win hem skinketh[6] al aboute,
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
(For January was become hire knight,
And wolde bothe assaien his corage
In libertee, and eke in mariage)
And with hire firebrond in hire hond aboute
Danceth before the bride and all the route.
And certainly I dare right wel say this,
Ymeneus, that God of wedding is,
Saw never his lif so mery a wedded man.
Hold thou thy pees, thou poet Marcian,[7]

[1] Feed, dowered. [2] Signed them with the cross.
[3] Sure, fast. [4] Dais.
[5] The pronoun *he* is used emphatically. Theodomas was probably a celebrated trumpeter in some "romantic history" of Thebes, to which the poet alludes.
[6] Poureth out, maketh flow freely. [7] Marcianus Capella.

That writest us that ilke wedding mery
Of hire Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe:
To smal is both thy pen and eke thy tonge
For to descriven of this mariage.
Whan tendre youth hath wedded stouping age,
Ther is swiche mirth that it may not be writen;
Assaieth it yourself, than may ye witen
If that I lie or non in this matere.
Maius, that sit with so benigne a chere,
Hire to behold it semed faerie,
Quene Hester loked never with swiche an eye
On Assuere, so meke a look hath she,
I may you not devise all hire beautee;
But thus moch of hire beautee tell I may,
That she was like the brighte morwe of May
Fulfilled of all beautee, and plesance.
This January is ravished in a trance,
At every time he loketh in hire face,
But in his herte he gan hire to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hire streine
Harder than ever Paris did Heleine.
But natheles yet had he gret pitee
That thilke night offenden hire must he,
And thought, alas, o tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighten wel endure
All my corage, it is so sharpe and kene;
I am agast ye shal it nat sustene.
But God forbede, that I did all my might.
Now wolde God that it were waxen night,
And that the night wold lasten ever mo.
I wold that all this peple were ago.
And finally he doth all his labour,
As he best mighte, saving his honour,
To haste hem fro the mete[1] in subtil wise.
The time came that reson was to rise,
And after that men dance, and drinken fast,
And spices all about the hous they cast,
And ful of joye and blisse is every man,
All but a squier, that highte Damian,
Which carf beforn the knight ful many a day:
He was so ravisht on his lady May,

[1] From the banquet.

That for the veray peine he was nie wood;[1]
Almost he swelt, and swouned ther he stood:
So sore hath Venus hurt him with hire brond,
As that she bare it dancing in hire hond.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this time speke I;
But ther I let him wepe ynow and plaine,
Till freshe May wol rewen on his peine.
O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw bredeth!
O famuler fo,[2] that his service bedeth![3]
O servant traitour, false of holy hewe,[4]
Like to the nedder[5] in bosom slie untrewe,
God shelde us alle from your acquaintance!
O January, dronken in plesance
Of mariage, see how thy Damian,
Thin owen squier and thy boren man,
Entendeth for to do thee vilanie:
God grante thee thin homly fo to espie,
For in this world n'is werse pestilence,
Than homly fo, all day in thy presence.
Parformed hath the sonne his arke diurne,
No longer may the body of him sojourne
On the orisont, as in that latitude:
Night with his mantel, that is derke and rude,
Gan oversprede the Hemisperie aboute:
For which departed is this lusty route
Fro January, with thank on every side.
Home to hir houses lustily they ride,
Ther as they don hir thinges, as hem lest,
And whan they saw hir time gon[6] to rest.
Sone after that this hastif January
Wol go to bed, he wol no longer tary.
He drinketh Ipocras, clarre, and vernage[7]
Of spices hot, to encresen his corage:

[1] Mad. [2] Domestic foe. [3] Proffereth.
[4] Cf. vs. 12355. "under hewe of holinesse.
[5] Adder. [6] Time for them to go.
[7] The Vernage, whatever may have been the reason of its name, was probably a wine of Crete, or of the neighbouring continent. Froiss. v. iv. c. 18. De l'isle de Candie il leur venoit tresbonnes *malvoisies* et grenaches (r. *gernaches*) dont ils estoient largement servis et confortez. Our author in another place, ver. 13000, l. joins together the wines of *Malvesie* and *Vernage*. Malvasia was a town upon the eastern coast of the Morea, near the site of the ancient Epidaurus Limera within a small distance from Crete.—*Tyrwhitt.*

And many a letuarie had he ful fine,
Swiche as the cursed monk dan[1] Constantine
Hath written in his book *de Coitu;*
To ete hem all he wolde nothing eschue:
And to his privee frendes thus sayd he:
For Goddes love, as sone as it may be,
Let voiden all this hous in curteis wise.
And they han don right as he wol devise.
Men drinken, and the travers drawe anon;
The bride is brought a-bed as still as ston;
And whan the bed was with the preest yblessed,
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed,
And January hath fast in armes take
His freshe May, his paradis, his make.
He lulleth hire, he kisseth hire ful oft;
With thicke bristles of his berd unsoft,
Like to the skin of houndfish, sharp as brere,
(For he was shave al newe in his manere)
He rubbeth hire upon hire tendre face,
And sayde thus; Alas! I mote trespace
To you, my spouse, and you gretly offend,
Or time come that I wol doun descend.
But natheles considereth this (quod he)
Ther n'is no werkman, whatsoever he be,
That may both werken wel and hastily:
This wol be don at leiser parfitly.
It is no force how longe that we play;
In trewe wedlok coupled be we tway;
And blessed be the yoke that we ben inne,
For in our actes may ther be no sinne.
A man may do no sinne with his wif,
Ne hurt himselven with his owen knif:
For we have leve to play us by the lawe.
Thus laboureth he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he taketh a sop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bed than sitteth he.
And after that he sang ful loud and clere,
And kist his wif, and maketh wanton chere.
He was al coltish, ful of ragerie,
And ful of jergon, as a flecked pie.
The slacke skin about his necke shaketh,
While that he sang, so chanteth he and craketh.

[1] Lord, master, a corruption of Dominus. So Dom is still used in France.

But God wot what that May thought in hire herte,
Whan she him saw up sitting in his sherte
In his night cap, and with his necke lene:
She praiseth not his playing worth a bene.
Than sayd he thus; my reste wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake;
And doun he layd his hed and slept til prime.
And afterward, whan that he saw his time,
Up riseth January, but freshe May
Held hire in chambre til the fourthe day,
As usage is of wives for the beste.
For every labour somtime moste han reste,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to say, no lives creature,
Be it of fish, or brid, or best, or man.
Now wol I speke of woful Damian,
That langureth[1] for love, as ye shul here;
Therfore I speke to him in this manere.
I say, O sely Damian, alas!
Answer to this demand, as in this cas,
How shalt thou to thy lady freshe May
Tellen thy wo? She wol alway say nay;
Eke if thou speke, she wol thy wo bewrein;[2]
God be thin help, I can no better sein.
This sike Damian in Venus fire
So brenneth, that he dieth for desire;
For which he put his lif in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wise endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wrote he all his sorwe,
In manere of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freshe lady May.
And in a purse of silk, heng on his sherte,
He hath it put, and layd it at his herte.
The mone that at none was thilke day
That January hath wedded freshe May
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden;[3]
So long hath Maius in hire chambre abiden,

[1] Languisheth. [2] Betray.

[3] The greatest number of MSS. read, *two*, *tuo*, *too*, or *to*. But the time given (*foure dayes complete*, ver. 9767.) is not sufficient for the moon to pass from the second degree of Taurus into Cancer. The mean daily motion of the moon being = 13°. 10′. 35″. her motion in four days is = 1ˢ. 22°. 42′. or not quite 53 degrees; so that, supposing her to set out

As custome is unto thise nobles alle.
A bride shal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes four or three dayes at the leste
Ypassed ben, than let hire go to feste.
The fourthe day complete fro none to none,
Whan that the highe messe was ydone,
In halle sat this January and May,
As fresh as is the brighte somers day.
And so befel, how that this goode man
Remembred him upon this Damian,
And sayde; Seinte Marie, how may it be,
That Damian entendeth[1] not to me?
Is he ay sike? or how may this betide?
His squiers, which that stoden ther beside,
Excused him, because of his siknesse,
Which letted[2] him to don his besinesse:
Non other cause mighte make him tary.
That me forthinketh, quod this January;
He is a gentil squier by my trouthe.
If that he died, it were gret harme and routhe.
He is as wise, discret, and as secree,
As any man I wote of his degree.
And therto manly and eke servisable,
And for to ben a thrifty man right able.
But after mete as sone as ever I may
I wol myselfe visite him, and eke May,
To don him all the comfort that I can.
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bountee and his gentillesse
He wolde so comforten in siknesse
His squier, for it was a gentil dede.
Dame, quod this January, take good hede,
At after mete, ye with your women alle,
(Whan that ye ben in chambre out of this halle)
That all ye gon to see this Damian:
Doth him disport, he is a gentil man,
And telleth him that I wol him visite,
Have I no thing but rested me a lite:

from the second of Taurus, she would not, in that time, be advanced beyond the 25th degree of Gemini. If she set out from the 10th degree of Taurus, as I have corrected the text, she might properly enough be said, in four days, to be *gliden into* Cancer.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Attendeth. [2] Hindered.

And spede you faste, for I wol abide
Till that ye slepen faste by my side.
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A squier, that was marshal of his halle,
And told him certain thinges that he wolde.
This freshe May hath streight hire way yholde
With all hire women unto Damian.
Doun by his beddes side sit she than,
Comforting him as goodly as she may.
This Damian, whan that his time he say,[1]
In secree wise, his purse, and eke his bill,[2]
In which that he ywritten had his will,
Hath put into hire hond withouten more,
Save that he siked wonder depe and sore,
And softely to hire right thus sayd he;
Mercie, and that ye nat discover me:
For I am ded, if that this thing be kid.[3]
This purse hath she in with[4] hire bosome hid,
And went hire way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January ycome is she,
That on his beddes side sate ful soft.
He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful oft:
And layd him doun to slepe, and that anon.
She feined hire, as that she muste gon
Ther as ye wote that every wight mot nede;
And whan she of this bill hath taken hede,
She rent it all to cloutes at the last,
And in the privee softely it cast.
Who studieth now but faire freshe May?
Adoun by olde January she lay,
That slepte, til the cough hath him awaked:
Anon he prayd hire stripen hire al naked,
He wolde of hire, he said, have som plesance
And said, hire clothes did him encombrance.
And she obeieth him, be hire lefe or loth.
But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wrought, I dare nat to you tell,
Or wheder hire thought it paradis or hell;
But ther I let hem werken in hir wise
Til evesong rang, and that they must arise.
Were it by destinee, or aventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,

[1] Saw. [2] Billet, writing.
[3] Made known. [4] Within.

Or constellation, that in swiche estat
The heven stood at that time fortunat,
As for to put a bill of Venus werkes
(For alle thing hath time, as sayn thise clerkes)
To any woman for to get hire love,
I cannot say, but grete God above,
That knoweth that non act is causeles,
He deme of all, for I wol hold my pees.
But soth is this, how that this freshe May
Hath taken swiche impression that day
Of pitee on this sike Damian,
That fro hire herte she ne driven can
The remembrance for to don him ese.
Certain (thought she) whom that this thing displese
I rekke not, for here I him assure,
To love him best of any creature,
Though he no more hadde than his sherte.
Lo, pitee renneth sone in gentil herte.
Here may ye seen, how excellent franchise[1]
In women is whan they hem narwe avise.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many on,
That hath an herte as hard as any ston,
Which wold han lette him sterven[2] in the place
Wel rather than han granted him hire grace:
And hem rejoycen in hir cruel pride,
And rekken not to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,
Right of hire hond a lettre maketh she,
In which she granteth him hire veray grace;
Ther lacked nought, but only day and place,
Wher that she might unto his lust suffice:
For it shal be, right as he wol devise.
And whan she saw hire time upon a day
To visiten this Damian goth this May,
And sotilly this lettre doun she threst
Under his pilwe, rede it if him lest.
She taketh him by the hond, and hard him twist[3]
So secretly, that no wight of it wist,
And bade him ben all hol,[4] and forth she went
To January, whan he for hire sent.
Up riseth Damian the nexte morwe,
Al passed was his siknesse and his sorwe.

[1] Frankness. [2] Die.
[3] Pressed, squeezed. [4] Well, sound.

He kembeth him, he proineth him and piketh,[1]
He doth all that his lady lust and liketh;
And eke to January he goth as lowe,
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is so plesant unto every man,
(For craft is all, who so that don it can)
That every wight is ain to speke him good;
And fully in his ladies grace he stood.
Thus let I Damian about his nede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.
Som clerkes holden that felicitee
Stant in delit, and therfore certain he
This noble January, with all his might
In honest wise as longeth to a knight,
Shope him to liven ful deliciously.
His housing, his array, as honestly
To his degree was maked as a kinges.
Amonges other of his honest thinges
He had a gardin walled all with ston,
So fayre a gardin wote I no wher non.
For out of doute I verily suppose,
That he that wrote the Romant of the Rose,
Ne coude of it the beautee wel devise:
Ne Priapus ne mighte not suffise,
Though he be god of gardins, for to tell
The beautee of the gardin, and the well,
That stood under a laurer alway grene.
Ful often time he Pluto and his quene
Proserpina, and alle hir faerie,
Disporten hem and maken melodie
About that well, and daunced, as men told.
This noble knight, this January the old
Swiche deintee hath in it to walke and pley,
That he wol suffre no wight bere the key,
Sauf he himself, for of the smal wiket
He bare alway of silver a cliket,[2]
With which whan that him list he it unshette.
And whan that he wold pay his wives dette
In somer seson thider wold he go,
And May his wif, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not don a-bedde,
He in the gardin parfourmed hem and spedde.

[1] Pruneth and picketh, a metaphor taken from birds. [2] Key.

And in this wise many a mery day
Lived this January and freshe May,
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O soden hap, o thou fortune unstable,
Like to the Scorpion so deceivable,
That flatrest with thy hed whan thou wolt sting;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin envenuming.
O brotel joye, o swete poyson queinte,
O monstre, that so sotilly canst peinte
Thy giftes, under hewe of stedfastnesse,
That thou deceivest bothe more and lesse,
Why hast thou January thus deceived,
That haddest him for thy ful frend received?
And now thou hast beraft him both his eyen,
For sorwe of which desireth he to dyen.
Alas! this noble January free,
Amidde his lust and his prosperitee
Is waxen blind, and that al sodenly.
He wepeth and he waileth pitously;
And therwithall, the fire of jalousie
(Lest that his wif shuld fall in som folie)
So brent his herte, that he wolde fain,
That som man had both him and hire yslain;
For nother after his deth, ne in his lif,
Ne wold he that she were no love ne wif,
But ever live as a widewe in clothes blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost hire make.
But at the last, after a moneth or tway
His sorwe gan asswagen, soth to say.
For whan he wist it might non other be,
He patiently toke his adversitee:
Save out of doute he ne may nat forgon,
That he n'as jalous ever more in on:
Which jalousie it was so outrageous,
That neither in halle, ne in non other hous,
Ne in non other place never the mo
He n'olde suffre hire for to ride or go,
But if that he had honde on hire alway.
For which ful often wepeth freshe May,
That loveth Damian so brenningly,
That she moste either dien sodenly,
Or elles she moste han him as hire lest:
She waited whan hire herte wold to-brest.[1]

[1] Burst.

Upon that other side Damian
Becomen is the sowefullest man
That ever was, for neither night ne day
Ne might he speke a word to freshe May,
As to his purpos of no swiche matere,
But if that January must it here,
That had an hand upon hire evermo.
But natheles, by writing to and fro,
And privee signes, wist he what she ment,
And she knew eke the fin[1] of his entent.
O January, what might it thee availe,
Though thou might seen, as fer as shippes saile?
For as good is blind to deceived be,
As be deceived, whan a man may see.
Lo Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For all that ever he coude pore or prien,
Yet was he blent,[2] and, God wot, so ben mo,
That wenen wisly that it be not so:
Passe over is an ese, I say no more.
This freshe May, of which I spake of yore,
In warm wex hath enprented the cliket,
That January bare of the smal wiket,
By which into his gardin oft he went;
And Damian that knew all hire entent
The cliket contrefeted prively;
Ther n'is no more to say, but hastily
Som wonder by this cliket shal betide,
Which ye shul heren, if ye wol abide.
O noble Ovide, soth sayest thou, God wote,
What sleight is it if love be long and hote,
That he n'ill find it out in som manere?
By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lere;
Though they were kept ful long and streit over all,
They ben accorded, rowning[3] thurgh a wall,
Ther no wight coude han founden swiche a sleighte.
But now to purpos; er that daies eighte
Were passed of the month of Juil, befill,
That January hath caught so gret a will,
Thurgh egging of his wif, him for to play
In his gardin, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morwe unto this May said he;
Rise up, my wif, my love, my lady free;

[1] End. [2] Blinded, deceived. [3] Whispering.

The turtles vois is herd, myn owen swete;
The winter is gon, with all his raines wete.
Come forth now with thin eyen columbine.
Wel fairer ben thy brests than ony wine.
The gardin is enclosed all aboute;
Come forth, my white spouse, for out of doute,
Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, o wif;
No spot in thee n'as never in all thy lif.
Come forth, and let us taken our disport,
I chese thee for my wif and my comfort.
Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damian a signe made she,
That he shuld go before with his cliket.
This Damian hath opened the wiket,
And in he stert, and that in swiche manere,
That no wight might him see neyther yhere,
And still he sit under a bush. Anon
This January, as blind as is a ston,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into this freshe gardin is ago,
And clapped to the wiket sodenly.
Now, wif, quod he, here n'is but thou, and I,
That art the creature that I best love:
For by that lord that sit in heven above,
I hadde lever dien on a knif,
Than thee offenden, dere trewe wif.
For Goddes sake, thinke how I thee chees,
Not for no covetise douteles,
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old and may not see,
Beth to me trewe, and I wol tell you why;
Certes three thinges shal ye win therby;
First love of Crist, and to yourself honour,
And all min heritage, toun and tour.
I yeve it you, maketh chartres as you lest:
This shal be don to-morwe er sonne rest,
So wisly God my soule bring to blisse;
I pray you on this covenant ye me kisse.
And though that I be jalous, wite me nought;[1]
Ye ben so depe enprented in my thought,
That whan that I consider your beautee,
And therwithall the unlikely elde of me,

[1] Think nothing of it.

I may not certes, though I shulde die,
Forbere to ben out of your compagnie
For veray love; this is withouten doute:
Now kisse me, wif, and let us rome aboute.
This freshe May, whan she thise wordes herd,
Benignely to January answerd,
But first and forward she began to wepe:
I have, quod she, a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also min honour,
And of my wifhood thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have assured in your hond,
Whan that the preest to you my body bond:
Wherfore I wol answere in this manere,
With leve of you, myn owen lord so dere.
I pray to God that never daw that day,
That I ne sterve, as foule as woman may,
If ever I do unto my kin that shame.
Or elles I empeire[1] so my name,
That I be false; and if I do that lakke,[2]
Do stripen me and put me in a sakke,
And in the nexte river do me drenche:
I am a gentil woman, and no wenche.
Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And women han reprefe of you ay newe.
Ye con non other daliance, I leve,
But speke to us as of untrust and repreve.
And with that word she saw wher Damian
Sat in the bush, and coughen she began;
And with hire finger a signe made she,
That Damian shuld climbe up on a tre,
That charged was with fruit, and up he went:
For verailly he knew all hire entent,
And every signe that she coude make,
Wel bet than January hire owen make.
For in a lettre she had told him all
Of this matere, how that he werken shall.
And thus I let him sitting in the pery,[3]
And January and May roming ful mery.
Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;
Phebus of gold his stremes doun hath sent
To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;
He was that time in *Geminis*, I gesse,

[1] Impair. [2] Fault, sin. [3] Pear.

But litel fro his declination
Of Cancer, Joves exaltation.
And so befell in that bright morwe tide,
That in the gardin, on the ferther side,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compagnie
Folwing his wif, the quene Proserpina,
Which that he ravisshed out of Ethna,
While that she gadred floures in the mede,[1]
(In Claudian ye may the story rede,
How that hire in his grisely carte he fette)
This king of Faerie adoun him sette
Upon a benche of turves freshe and grene,
And right anon thus said he to his quene.
My wif, quod he, ther may no wight say nay,
The experience so preveth it every day,
The treson which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notable of your untrouth and brotelnesse.
O Salomon, richest of all richesse,
Fulfilled of sapience, and worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and reson can.
Thus praiseth he the bountee yet of man;
Among a thousand men yet fond I on,
But of all women fond I never non.
Thus saith this king, that knewe your wikkednesse;
And Jesus, *Filius* Sirach, as I gesse,
He speketh of you but selden reverence.
A wilde fire, a corrupt pestilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shal make him cokewold.
Lo, wher he sit, the lechour, in the tree.
Now wol I graunten of my majestee
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he shal have again his eyen sight,
Whan that his wif wol don him vilanie;
Than shal he knowen all hire harlotrie,
Both in reprefe[3] of hire and other mo.
Ye, sire, quod Proserpine, and wol ye so?

[1] *I. e.*, in the field of Enna. [2] Brittleness. [3] Reproof.

Now by my modre Ceres soule I swere,
That I shal yeve hire suffisant answere,
And alle women after for hire sake;
That though they ben in any gilt ytake,
With face bold they shul hemselve excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuse.
For lacke of answere, non of us shul dien.
Al had ye seen a thing with bothe youre eyen,
Yet shul we so visage[1] it hardely,
And wepe and swere and chiden subtilly,
That ye shul ben as lewed[2] as ben gees.
What rekketh me of your auctoritees?
I wote wel that this Jewe, this Salomon,
Fond of us women fooles many on:
But though that he ne fond no good woman,
Ther hath yfonden many an other man
Women ful good, and trewe, and vertuous;
Witnesse on hem that dwelte in Cristes hous,
With martyrdom they preved hir constance.
The Romain gestes maken remembrance
Of many a veray trewe wif also.
But, sire, ne be not wroth, al be it so.
Though that he said he fond no good woman,
I pray you take the sentence of the man:
He ment thus, That in soveraine bountee[3]
N'is non but God, no, nouther he ne she.
Ey, for the veray God that n'is but on,
What maken ye so moche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he riche were and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of false goddes,
How might he don a thing that more forbode is?
Parde as faire as ye his name emplastre,
He was a lechour, and an idolastre,
And in his elde he veray God forsoke.
And if that God ne hadde (as saith the boke)
Spared him for his fathers sake, he sholde
Han lost his regne rather than he wolde.
I sete nat of all the vilanie,
That he of women wrote, a boterflie.
I am a woman, nedes moste I speke,
Or swell unto that time min herte breke.

[1] Face, brazen it out. [2] Simple, ignorant. [3] Goodness.

For sin he said that we ben jangleresses,
As ever mote I brouken hole my tresses,
I shal nat sparen for no curtesie
To speke him harm, that sayth us vilanie.
Dame, quod this Pluto, be no lenger wroth,
I yeve it up: but sin I swore min oth.
That I wold graunten him his sight again,
My word shal stand, that warne I you certain.
I am a king, it sit me not to lie.
And I, quod she, am quene of Faerie.
Hire answere she shal han I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forsoth, quod he, I wol you not contrary.
Now let us turne again to January,
That in the gardin with his faire May
Singeth wel merier than the popingay:
"You love I best, and shal, and other non."[1]
So long about the alleyes is he gon,
Til he was comen again to thilke pery,
Wher as this Damian sitteth ful mery
On high, among the freshe leves grene.
This freshe May, that is so bright and shene,
Gan for to sike, and said; alas my side!
Now, sire, quod she, for ought that may betide
I moste have of the peres that I see,
Or I moste die, so sore longeth me
To eten of the smale peres grene:
Help for hire love that is of heven quene.
I tell you wel a woman in my plit
May have to fruit so gret an appetit,
That she may dien, but she of it have.
Alas! quod he, that I n'adde here a knave,
That coude climbe, alas! alas! (quod he)
For I am blinde. Ye, sire, no force, quod she;
But wold ye vouchesauf for Goddes sake,
The pery in with your armes for to take,
(For wel I wot that ye mistrusten me)
Than wold I climben wel ynough, (quod she)
So I my fote might setten on your back.
Certes, said he, therin shal be no lack,
Might I you helpen with min herte blood.
He stoupeth doun, and on his back she stood,

[1] This seems like a quotation from some popular ballad of the time.

And caught hire by a twist, and up she goth.
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I can nat glose, I am a rude man:)
And sodenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto saw this grete wrong,
To January he yaf again his sight,
And made him see as wel as ever he might.
And whan he thus had caught his sight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fain:
But on his wif his thought was ever mo.
Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,
And saw how Damian his wife had dressed
In swiche manere, it may not ben expressed,
But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.
And up he yaf a roring and a cry,
As doth the mother whan the child shal die;
Out! helpe! alas! harow! he gan to cry;
O stronge lady store, what doest thou?
And she answered: sire, what aileth you?
Have patience and reson in your minde,
I have you holpen on both your eyen blinde.
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lien,
As me was taught to helpen with your eyen,
Was nothing better for to make you see,
Than strogle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in ful good entent.
Strogle! quod he, ye, algate in it went.
God yeve you both on shames deth to dien!
He swived thee; I saw it with min eyen;
And elles be I honged by the halse.
Than is, quod she, my medicine al false.
For certainly, if that ye mighten see,
Ye wold not say thise wordes unto me.
Ye have som glimsing, and no parfit sight.
I see, quod he, as wel as ever I might,
(Thanked be God) with both min eyen two,
And by my feith me thought he did thee so.
Ye mase, ye masen, goode sire, quod she;
This thank have I for I have made you see:
Alas! quod she, that ever I was so kind.
Now, dame, quod he, let al passe out of mind:
Come doun, my lefe, and if I have missaid,
God helpe me so, as I am evil apaid.

But by my fadres soule, I wende have sein,
How that this Damian had by thee lein,
And that thy smock had lein upon his brest.
Ye, sire, quod she, ye may wene as you lest:
But, sire, a man that waketh of his slepe,
He may not sodenly wel taken kepe
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfitly,
Til that he be adawed verraily.[1]
Right so a man, that long hath blind ybe,
He may not sodenly so wel ysee,
First whan his sight is newe comen agein,
As he that hath a day or two ysein.
Til that your sight ysateled[2] be a while,
Ther may ful many a sighte you begile.
Beware, I pray you, for by heven king
Ful many a man weneth[3] to see a thing,
And it is all another than it semeth:
He which that misconceiveth oft misdemeth.
And with that word she lep doun fro the tree.
This January who is glad but he?
He kisseth hire, and clippeth hire ful oft,
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful soft;
And to his paleis home he hath hire lad.
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie,
God blesse us, and his moder Seinte Marie.

[1] Thoroughly awakened. [2] Settled, established. [3] Thinketh.

THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

10293–10322.

By Goddes mercy, sayde oure Hoste tho,
Now swiche a wif I preie God kepe me fro.
Lo, swiche sleightes and subtilitees
In women ben; for ay as besy as bees
Ben they us sely men for to deceive,
And from a sothe[1] wol they ever weive.[2]
By this Marchantes tale it preveth wel.
But natheles, as trewe as any stele,
I have a wif, though that she poure be:
But of hire tonge a labbing[3] shrewe is she;
And yet she hath an hepe of vices mo.
Therof no force; let all swiche thinges go.
But wete ye what? in conseil be it seyde,
Me reweth sore I am unto hire teyde;
For and I shulde rekene every vice,
Which that she hath, ywis I were to nice;
And cause why, it shulde reported be
And told to hire of som of this compagnie,
(Of whom it nedeth not for to declare,
Sin women connen utter swiche chaffare)
And eke my wit sufficeth not therto
To tellen all; wherfore my tale is do.
Squier, come ner, if it youre wille be,
And say somwhat of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as any man.
Nay, sire, quod he, but swiche thing as I can
With hertly wille, for I wol not rebelle
Agein youre lust, a tale wol I telle.
Have me excused if I speke amis;
My wille is good; and lo, my tale is this.

[1] Truth. [2] Depart. [3] Blabbing.

The Squieres Tale.

10323–10354.

At Sarra, in the lond of Tartarie,
Ther dwelt a king that werreied[1] Russie,
Thurgh which ther died many a doughty man:
This noble king was cleped Cambuscan,
Which in his time was of so gret renoun,
That ther n'as no wher in no regioun,
So excellent a lord in alle thing:
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
As of the secte of which that he was borne.
He kept his lay to which he was ysworne,
And therto he was hardy, wise, and riche,
And pitous and just, and alway yliche;[2]
Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable:
Of his corage as any centre stable;
Yong, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous,
As any bacheler of all his hous.
A faire person he was, and fortunate,
And kept alway so wel real[3] estat,
That ther n'as no wher swiche another man.
This noble king, this Tartre Cambuscan,
Hadde two sones by Elfeta his wif,
Of which the eldest sone highte Algarsif,
That other was ycleped Camballo.
A doughter had this worthy king also,
That yongest was, and highte Canace:
But for to tellen you all hire beautee,
It lith not in my tonge, ne in my conning,
I dare not undertake so high a thing:
Min English eke is unsufficient,
It muste ben a Rethor[4] excellent,
That coude his colours longing for[5] that art,
If he shuld hire descriven ony part:

[1] Warred against. [2] Alike. [3] Royal.
[4] A rhetorician, orator. [5] That would know the colours belonging to.

I am not swiche, I mote speke as I can.
And so befell, that whan this Cambuscan
Hath twenty winter borne his diademe,
As he was wont fro yere to yere I deme,
He let the feste of his nativitee
Don crien, thurghout Sarra his citee,
The last Idus of March, after the yere.
Phebus the sonne ful jolif was and clere,
For he was nigh his exaltation[1]
In Martes face, and in his mansion
In Aries, the colerike hote signe:
Ful lusty was the wether and benigne,
For which the foules[2] again the sonne shene,
What for the seson and the yonge grene,
Ful loude songen hir affections:
Hem semed han getten hem protections
Again the swerd of winter kene and cold.
This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In real[3] vestiments, sit on his deis
With diademe, ful high in his paleis;
And holt his feste so solempne and so riche,
That in this world ne was ther non it liche.[4]
Of which if I shal tellen all the array,
Than wold it occupie a somers day;
And eke it nedeth not for to devise
At every cours the order of hir service.
I wol not tellen of hir strange sewes,[5]
Ne of hir swannes, ne hir heronsewes.[6]
Eke in that lond, as tellen knightes old,
Ther is som mete that is ful deintee hold,[7]
That in this lond men recche of it ful smal:
Ther n'is no man that may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but losse of time,
Unto my purpose I wol have recours.
And so befell that after the thridde cours
While that this king sit thus in his nobley,
Herking[8] his ministralles hir thinges pley

[1] *I. e.*, his highest influence. [2] The birds, *i. e.*, their plumage.
[3] Royal. [4] Like.
[5] Dishes. A sewer was an officer so called from his placing the dishes upon the table. *Asseour*, Fr. from *asseoir*, to place.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[6] Young herons, *heronçeaux.*
[7] Accounted. [8] Listening to.

Beforne him at his bord deliciously,
In at the halle dore al sodenly
Ther came a knight upon a stede of bras,
And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked swerd hanging:
And up he rideth to the highe bord.
In all the halle ne was ther spoke a word,
For mervaille of this knight; him to behold
Ful besily they waiten yong and old.
This strange knight that come thus sodenly
Al armed save his hed ful richely,
Salueth king and quene, and lordes alle
By order, as they saten in the halle,
With so high reverence and observance,
As wel in speche as in his contenance,
That Gawain[1] with his olde curtesie,
Though he were come agen out of faerie,
Ne coude him not amenden with a word.
And after this, beforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois sayd his message,
After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of sillable or of letter.
And for his tale shulde seme the better,
Accordant to his wordes was his chere,[2]
As techeth art of speche hem that it lere,[3]
Al be it that I cannot soune his stile,
Ne cannot climben over so high a stile,
Yet say I this, as to comun entent,
Thus much amounteth all that ever he ment,
If it so be that I have it in mind.
He sayd; The king of Arabie and of Inde,
My liege lord, on this solempne day
Salueth you as he best can and may,
And sendeth you in honour of your feste
By me, that am al redy at your heste,

[1] Nephew to King *Arthur*, by his sister married to King *Lot*. So says the *British History* which goes under the name of *Geoffrey of Monmouth;* and I believe it will be in vain to look for any more authentic genealogist of all that family. He is there called *Walganus*. The French romancers, who have built upon Geoffrey's foundations, agree in describing Gawain as a model of *knightly courtesy*. To this his established character our author alludes.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Manner. [3] Learn.

This stede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of a day naturel,
(This is to sayn, in four and twenty houres)
Wher so you list, in drought or elles shoures.[1]
Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte willeth for to pace,
Withouten wemme[2] of you, thurgh foule or faire.
Or if you list to fleen as high in the aire,
As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
This same stede shal bere you evermore
Withouten harme, til ye be ther you lest,
(Though that ye slepen on his back or rest)
And turne again, with writhing of a pin.
He that it wrought, he coude many a gin;[3]
He waited many a constellation,
Or he had don this operation,
And knew ful many a sele[4] and many a bond.
This mirrour eke, that I have in min hond,
Hath swiche a might, that men may in it see,
Whan ther shal falle ony adversitee
Unto your regne, or to yourself also,
And openly, who is your frend or to.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,
If he be false, she shal his treson see,
His newe love, and all his subtiltee
So openly, that ther shal nothing hide.
Wherfore again this lusty somer tide
This mirrour and this ring, that ye may se,
He hath sent to my lady Canace,
Your excellente doughter that is here.
The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here,
Is this, that if hire list it for to were
Upon hire thombe, or in hire purse it bere,
Ther is no foule that fleeth under heven,
That she ne shal wel understond his steven,[5]
And know his mening openly and plaine,
And answere him in his langage again:
And every gras[6] that groweth upon rote[7]
She shal eke know, and whom it wol do bote,[8]

[1] In dry weather or wet.
[2] Fault.
[3] Knew many a trick.
[4] Seal.
[5] Voice.
[6] Herb.
[7] Root.
[8] Help, remedy.

All be his woundes never so depe and wide.
This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side,
Swiche vertue hath, that what man that it smite,
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and bite,
Were it as thicke as is a braunched oke:
And what man that is wounded with the stroke
Shal never be hole, til that you list of grace
To stroken him with the platte[1] in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as much to sain,
Ye moten with the platte swerd again
Stroken him in the wound, and it wol close.
This is the veray soth withouten glose,
It failleth not, while it is in your hold.
And whan this knight hath thus his tale told,
He rideth out of halle, and doun he light:
His stede, which that shone as sonne bright,
Stant in the court as stille as any ston.
This knight is to his chambre ladde anon,
And is unarmed, and to the mete ysette.
Thise presents ben ful richelich yfette,
This is to sain, the swerd and the mirrour,
And borne anon into the highe tour,
With certain officers ordained therfore;
And unto Canace the ring is bore
Solempnely, ther she sat at the table;
But sikerly,[2] withouten any fable,
The hors of bras, that may not be remued;[3]
It stant, as it were to the ground yglued;
Ther may no man out of the place it drive
For non engine, of windas,[4] or polive:[5]
And cause why, for they con not the craft,
And therfore in the place they han it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere
To voiden[6] him, as ye shal after here.
Gret was the prees, that swarmed to and fro
To gauren[7] on this hors that stondeth so:
For it so high was, and so brod and long,
So wel proportioned for to be strong,
Right as it were a stede of Lumbardie;
Therwith so horsly, and so quik of eye,

[1] The flat of the sword.
[2] In truth.
[3] Removed.
[4] Windlas. Fr. *guindal.*
[5] Pulley.
[6] Remove.
[7] Gaze.

As it a gentil Poileis[1] courser were:
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere
Nature ne art ne cond him not amend
In no degree, as all the peple wend.
But evermore hir moste wonder was,
How that it coude gon, and was of bras;
It was of faerie, as the peple semed.
Diverse folk diversely han demed;
As many heds,[2] as many wittes ben.
They murmured, as doth a swarme of been,
And maden skilles[3] after hir fantasies,
Rehersing of the olde poetries,
And sayd it was ylike the Pegasee,
The hors that hadde winges for to flee,
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Sinon,[4]
That broughte Troye to destruction,
As men moun in thise olde gestes rede.
Min herte (quod on) is evermore in drede,
I trow som men of armes ben therin,
That shapen hem[5] this citee for to win:
It were right good that al swiche thing were know.
Another rowned[6] to his felaw low,
And sayd, He lieth, for it is rather like
An apparence ymade by som magike,
As jogelours plaien at thise festes grete.
Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demen comunly
Of thinges, that ben made more subtilly,
Than they can in hir lewednesse[7] comprehende,
They demen gladly to the badder ende.
And som of hem wondred on the mirrour,
That born was up in to the maister tour,

[1] A horse of *Apulia*, which in old Fr. was usually called *Poille*. The horses of that country were much esteemed. MS. *Bod.* James vi. 142. Richard, Archbp. of Armagh, in the xivth century, says, in praise of our St. Thomas, "quod nec mulus Hispaniæ, nec *dextrarius Apuliæ*, nec repedo Æthiopiæ, nec elephantus Asiæ, nec camelus Syriæ hoc asino nostro Angliæ aptior sive audentior invenitur ad prælia." He had before informed his audience, that *Thomas*, Anglice, idem est quod *Thom. Asinus*. There is a patent in Rymer, 2 E. II. *De dextrariis* in Lumbardiâ *emendis.*—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Cf. Latin proverb: "Quot homines, tot sententiæ."

[3] Devised reasons. [4] *I. e.*, the horse of Sinon the Greek.

[5] Devise. [6] Whispered. [7] Ignorance.

How men mighte in it swiche thinges see.
Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be
Naturelly by compositions
Of angles, and of slie reflections;
And saide that in Rome was swiche on.
They speke of Alhazen and Vitellon,[1]
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lives
Of queinte mirrours, and of prospectives,
As knowen they, that han hir bookes herd.
And other folk han wondred on the swerd,
That wolde percen thurghout every thing:
And fell in speche of Telephus the king,
And of Achilles for his queinte spere,
For he coude with it bothe hele and dere,[2]
Right in swiche wise as men may with the swerd,
Of which right now ye have yourselven herd.
They speken of sondry harding of metall,
And speken of medicines therwithall,
And how, and whan it shuld yharded be,
Which is unknow algates unto me.
Tho speken they of Canacées ring,
And saiden all, that swiche a wonder thing
Of craft of ringes herd they never non,
Save that he Moises and king Salomon
Hadden a name of conning in swiche art.
Thus sain the peple, and drawen hem apart.
But natheles some saiden that it was
Wonder to maken of ferne ashen glas,
And yet is glas nought like ashen of ferne,
But for they han yknowen it so ferne,
Therfore ceseth hir jangling and hir wonder.
As sore wondren som on cause of thonder,
On ebbe and floud, on gossomer, and on mist,
And on all thing, til that the cause is wist.
Thus janglen they, and demen and devise,
Til that the king gan fro his bord arise.
Phebus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet ascending was the beste real,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldrian,[3]
Whan that this Tartre king, this Cambuscan,

[1] Two writers on optics, the first about A.D. 1100, the second is said to have lived till A.D. 1270.
[2] Harm, wound. [3] A star on the neck of the constellation Leo.

Rose from his bord, ther as he sat ful hie:
Beforne him goth the loude minstralcie,
Till he come to his chambre of parements,[1]
Ther as they sounden divers instruments,
That it is like an heven for to here.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children dere:
For in the fish[2] hir lady set ful hie,
And loketh on hem with a frendly eye.
This noble king is set upon his trone;
This straunge knight is fet[3] to him ful sone,
And on the daunce he goth with Canace.
Here is the revell and the jolitee,
That is not able a dull man to devise:
He must han knowen love and his servise,
And ben a festlich man, as fresh as May,
That shulde you devisen swiche array.
Who coude tellen you the forme of dauncs
So uncouth, and so freshe contenaunces,
Swiche subtil lokings and dissimulings,
For dred of jalous mennes apperceivings?
No man but Launcelot, and he is ded.
Therfore I passe over all this lustyhed,
I say no more, but in this jolinesse
I lete hem, til men to the souper hem dresse.
The steward bit[4] the spices for to hie[5]
And eke the win, in all this melodie;
The ushers and the squierie ben gon,
The spices and the win is come anon:
They ete and drinke, and whan this had an end,
Unto the temple, as reson was, they wend:
The service don, they soupen all by day.
What nedeth you rehersen hir array?
Eche man wot wel, that at a kinges fest
Is plentee, to the most and to the lest,
And deintees mo than ben in my knowing.
At after souper goth this noble king
To seen this hors of bras, with all a route
Of lordes and of ladies him aboute.
Swiche wondring was ther on this hors of bras,
That sin the gret assege of Troye was,

[1] Presence chamber. Cf. vs. 2513.
[2] *I. e.*, the "exaltation" of Venus was in the constellation Pisces.
[3] Fetched. [4] Biddeth. [5] Hasten.

Ther as men wondred on an hors also,
Ne was ther swiche a wondring, as was tho.
But finally the king asketh the knight
The vertue of this courser, and the might,
And praied him to tell his governaunce.
This hors anon gan for to trip and daunce,
Whan that the knight laid hond up on his rein,
And saide, sire, ther n'is no more to sain,
But whan you list to riden any where,
Ye moten trill[1] a pin, stant in his ere,
Which I shal tellen you betwixt us two,
Ye moten nempne[2] him to what place also,
Or to what contree that you list to ride.
And whan ye come ther as you list abide,
Bid him descend, and trill another pin,
(For therin lieth the effect of all the gin)
And he wol doun descend and don your will,
And in that place he wol abiden still:
Though al the world had the contrary swore,
He shal not thennes be drawe ne be bore.
Or if you list to bid him thennes gon,
Trille this pin, and he wol vanish anon
Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come agen, be it by day or night,
Whan that you list to clepen him again
In swiche a guise, as I shal to you sain
Betwixen you and me, and that ful sone.
Ride whan you list, ther n'is no more to done.
Enfourmed whan the king was of the knight,
And hath conceived in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of all this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel, as beforne.
The bridel is in to the tour yborne,
And kept among his jewels lefe and dere;
The hors vanisht, I n'ot in what manere,
Out of hir sight, ye get no more of me:
But thus I lete in lust and jolitee
This Cambuscan his lordes festeying,
Til that wel nigh the day began to spring.

[1] Twirl, turn round. [2] Tell.

PARS SECUNDA.

The norice[1] of digestion, the slepe,
Gan on hem winke, and bad hem taken kepe,
That mochel[2] drink, and labour wol have rest:
And with a galping[3] mouth hem all he kest,
And said, that it was time to lie adoun,
For blood was in his dominatioun:[4]
Cherisheth blood, natures frend, quod he.
They thanken him galping, by two by three;
And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
As slepe hem bade, they toke it for the best.
Hir dremes shul not now be told for me;
Ful were hir hedes of fumositee,
That causeth dreme, of which ther is no charge.
They slepen til that it was prime large,
The moste part, but it were Canace;
She was ful mesurable,[5] as women be.
For of hire father had she take hire leve
To gon to rest, sone after it was eve;
Hire liste not appalled for to be,
Nor on the morwe unfestliche for to see;
And slept hire firste slepe, and than awoke.
For swiche a joye she in hire herte toke
Both of hire queinte ring, and of hire mirrour,
That twenty time she chaunged hire colour;
And in hire slepe right for the impression
Of hire mirrour she had a vision.
Wherfore, or that the sonne gan up glide,
She clepeth upon hire maistresse hire beside,
And saide, that hire luste for to arise.
Thise olde women, that ben gladly wise,
As is hire maistresse, answered hire anon,
And said; Madame, whider wol ye gon

[1] Nurse.

[2] That mochel drinke and labour] So MSS. C. 1. HA. In MS. A. it is, *That mirthe and labour*. In Ask. 1. 2. *That after moche labour*. In several other MSS. and Editt. Ca. 1. 2. *That moche mete and labour*. We must search further, I apprehend, for the true reading.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Gaping, yawning.

[4] Galen says that blood is in its domination for seven hours, viz., from the ninth hour of night to the third of day.—See *Tyrwhitt.*

[5] Moderate.

Thus erly? for the folk ben all in rest.
I wol, quod she, arisen (for me lest
No longer for to slepe) and walken aboute.
Hire maistresse clepeth women a gret route,
And up they risen, wel a ten or twelve;
Up riseth freshe Canace hireselve,
As rody and bright, as the yonge sonne,
That in the ram is foure degrees yronne;
No higher was he, whan she redy was;
And forth she walketh esily a pas,
Arrayed after the lusty seson sote[1]
Lightely for to playe, and walken on fote,
Nought but with five or sixe of hire meinie;
And in a trenche forth in the park goth she.
The vapour, which that fro the erthe glode,
Maketh the sonne to seme rody and brode:
But natheles, it was so faire a sight,
That it made all hir hertes for to light,
What for the seson, and the morwening,
And for the foules that she herde sing.
For right anon she wiste what they ment
Right by hir song, and knew all hir entent.
The knotte,[2] why that every tale is tolde,
If it be taried til the lust be colde
Of hem, that han it herkened after yore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the more,
For fulsumnesse of the prolixitee:
And by that same reson thinketh me
I shuld unto the knotte condescende,
And maken of hire walking sone an ende.
Amidde a tree for-dry,[3] as white as chalk,
As Canace was playing in hire walk,
Ther sat a faucon over hire hed ful hie,
That with a pitous vois so gan to crie,
That all the wood resouned of hire cry,
And beten had hireself so pitously
With bothe hire winges, til the rede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as she stood.
And ever in on alway she cried and shright,[4]
And with hire bek hireselven she so twight,[5]

[1] Sweet.
[2] *I. e.*, the main event, the development of the story.
[3] Full dry. *For* is frequently intensive in composition.
[4] Shrieked. [5] Plucked, mangled

That ther n'is tigre, ne no cruel best,
That dwelleth other in wood, or in forest,
That n'olde han wept, if that he wepen coude,
For sorwe of hire, she shright alway so loude.
For ther was never yet no man on live,
If that he coude a faucon wel descrive,
That herde of swiche another of tayrenesse
As wel of plumage, as of gentilesse,
Of shape, of all that might yrekened be.
A faucon peregrine semed she
Of fremde lond,[1] and ever as she stood,
She swouned now and now for lack of blood,
Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree.
This faire kinges doughter Canace,
That on hire finger bare the queinte ring,
Thurgh which she understood wel every thing
That any foule may in his leden sain,
And coude answere him in his leden[2] again,
Hath understonden what this faucon seyd,
And wel neigh for the routhe almost she deyd:
And to the tree she goth ful hastily,
And on this faucon loketh pitously,
And held hire lap abrode, for wel she wist
The faucon muste fallen from the twist[3]
Whan that she swouned next, for faute[4] of blood.
A longe while to waiten hire she stood,
Til at the last she spake in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye shul after here.
What is the cause, if it be for to tell,
That ye ben in this furial peine of hell?
Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
Is this for sorwe of deth, or losse of love?
For as I trow, thise be the causes two,
That causen most a gentil herte wo.
Of other harme it nedeth not to speke,
For ye yourself upon yourself awreke,
Which preveth wel, that other ire or drede
Mote ben encheson[5] of your cruel dede,
Sin that I se non other wight you chace.
For the love of God, as doth yourselven grace:

[1] The same as "peregrine," *i. e.* from a strange country.
[2] Language, a corruption of *Latin*
[3] Twig, branch. [4] In default. [5] Occasion.

Or what may be your helpe? for west ne est
Ne saw I never er now no brid ne best,
That ferde with himself so pitously.
Ye sle me with your sorwe verily,
I have of you so gret compassioun.
For Goddes love come fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kinges doughter trewe,
If that I verily the causes knewe
Of your disese, if it lay in my might,
I wold amend it, or that it were night,
As wisly help me the gret God of kind.
And herbes shal I right ynough yfind,
To helen with your hurtes hastily.
Tho[1] shright this faucon yet more pitously
Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,
And lith aswoune, as ded as lith a ston,
Til Canace hath in hire lappe hire take,
Unto that time she gan of swoune awake:
And after that she out of swoune abraide,
Right in hire haukes leden[2] thus she sayde.
That pitee renneth sone in gentil herte
(Feling his similitude in peines smerte)
Is proved alle day, as men may see,
As wel by werke as by auctoritee,
For gentil herte kitheth[3] gentillesse.
I see wel, that ye have on my distresse
Compassion, my faire Canace,
Of veray womanly benignitee,
That nature in your principles hath set.
But for non hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obey unto your herte free,
And for to maken other yware by me,
As by the whelpe chastised is the leon,
Right for that cause and that conclusion.
While that I have a leiser and a space,
Min harme I wol confessen er I pace.
And ever while that on hire sorwe told,
That other wept, as she to water wold,
Til that the faucon bad hire to be still,
And with a sike[4] right thus she said hire till.
Ther I was bred, (alas that ilke day!)
And fostred in a roche[5] of marble gray

[1] Then. [2] Voice.
[3] Kisseth. [4] Sigh. [5] Rock.

So tendrely, that nothing ailed me.
I ne wist not what was adversitee,
Til I could flee ful high under the skie.
Tho dwelled a tercelet[1] me faste by,
That semed welle of alle gentillesse,
Al were he ful of treson and falsenesse.
It was so wrapped under humble chere,
And under hew of trouth in swiche manere,
Under plesance, and under besy peine,
That no wight coud have wend he coude feine.
So depe in greyn he died his coloures.
Right as a serpent hideth him under floures,
Til he may see his time for to bite;
Right so this god of loves hypocrite
Doth so his ceremonies and obeisance,
And kepeth in semblaunt alle his observance,
That souneth unto[2] gentillesse of love.
As on a tombe is all the faire above,
And under is the corps, swiche as ye wote;
Swiche was this hypocrite both cold and hote.
And in this wise he served his entent,
That, save the fend, non wiste what he ment:
Til he so long had weped and complained,
And many a yere his service to me fained,
Till that min herte, to pitous and to nice,
Al innocent of his crowned malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his seuretee,
Graunted him love, on this conditioun,
That evermo min honour and renoun
Were saved, bothe privee and apert;
This is to say, that, after his desert,
I yave him all min herte and all my thought,
(God wote, and he, that other wayes nought)
And toke his herte in chaunge of min for ay.
But soth is said, gon sithen is many a day,
A trewe wight and a theef thinken not on.
And whan he saw the thing so fer ygon,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In swiche a guise as I have said above,
And yeven him my trewe herte as free
As he swore that he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fell on his knees with so gret humblesse,

[1] A male hawk. [2] In consonant to.

With so high reverence, as by his chere,
So like a gentil lover of manere,
So ravished, as it semed, for the joye,
That never Jason, ne Paris of Troye,
Jason? certes, ne never other man,
Sin Lamech was, that alderfirst began
To loven two, as writen folk beforne,
Ne never sithen the first man was borne,
Ne coude man by twenty thousand part
Contrefete the sophimes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbocle his galoche,[1]
Ther doublenesse of faining shuld approche,
Ne coude so thanke a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to see
To any woman, were she never so wise;
So painted he and kempt, at point devise,
As wel his wordes, as his contenance.
And I so loved him for his obeisance,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that anything him smerte,
Al were it never so lite, and I it wist,
Me thought I felt deth at myn herte twist.
And shortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
That my will was his willes instrument;
This is to say, my will obeied his will
In alle thing, as fer as reson fill,
Keping the boundes of my worship ever;
Ne never had I thing so lefe, ne lever,
As him, God wot, ne never shal no mo.
This lasteth lenger than a yere or two,
That I supposed of him nought but good.
But finally, thus at the last it stood,
That fortune wolde that he muste twin[2]
Out of that place, which that I was in.
Wher me was wo, it is no question;
I cannot make of it description.
For o thing dare I tellen boldely,
I know what is the peine of deth therby,
Swiche harme I felt, for he ne might byleve.
So on a day of me he toke his leve,
So sorweful eke, that I wend veraily,
That he had felt as mochel harme as I,

[1] Shoe. [2] Depart.

Whan that I herd him speke, and saw his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,
And eke that he repairen shuld again
Within a litel while, soth to sain,
And reson wold eke that he muste go
For his honour, as often happeth so,
That I made vertue of necessitee,
And toke it wel, sin that it muste be.
As I best might, I hid fro him my sorwe,
And toke him by the hond, Seint John to borwe,
And said him thus; lo, I am youres all,
Beth swiche as I have ben to you and shall.
What he answerd, it nedeth not reherse;
Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?
Whan he hath al wel said, than hath he done.
Therfore behoveth him a ful long spone,
That shal ete with a fend; thus herd I say.
So at the last he muste forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he come ther him lest.
Whan it came him to purpos for to rest,
I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
That alle thing repairing to his kind
Gladeth himself; thus sain men as I gesse:
Men loven of propre kind newefangelnesse,
As briddes don, that men in cages fede.
For though thou night and day take of hem hede,
And strew hir cage faire and soft as silk,
And give hem sugre, hony, bred, and milke,
Yet right anon as that his dore is up,
He with his feet wol spurnen doun his cup,
And to the wood he wol, and wormes ete;
So newefangel ben they of hir mete,
And loven noveltees of propre kind;
No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bind.
So ferd this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentil borne, and fresh and gay,
And goodly for to seen, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kite flee,
And sodenly he loved this kite so,
That all his love is clene fro me ago;
And hath his trouthe falsed in this wise.
Thus hath the kite my love in hire service,
And I am lorn withouten remedy.
And with that word this faucon gan to cry,

And swouneth eft in Canacees barme.[1]
Gret was the sorwe for that haukes harme,
That Canace and all hire women made;
They n'isten[2] how they might the faucon glade.
But Canace hom bereth hire in hire lap,
And softely in plastres gan hire wrap,
Ther as she with her bek had hurt hireselve.
Now cannot Canace but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and maken salves newe
Of herbes precious and fine of hewe,
To helen with this hauk; fro day to night
She doth hire besinesse, and all hire might.
And by hire beddes hed she made a mew,[3]
And covered it with velouettes[4] blew,
In signe of trouth, that is in woman sene;
And all without the mew is peinted grene,
In which were peinted all thise false foules,
As ben thise tidifes,[5] tercelettes, and owles;
And pies, on hem for to cry and chide,
Right for despit were peinted hem beside.
Thus lete I Canace hire hauk keping.
I wol no more as now speke of hire ring,
Til it come eft to purpos for to sain,
How that this faucon gat hire love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus
The kinges sone, of which that I you told.
But hennesforth I wol my processe hold
To speke of aventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never herd so gret mervailles.
First wol I tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his time many a citee wan:
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful oft in gret peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wol I speke of Camballo,
That fought in listes with the brethren two
For Canace, er that he might hire winne,
And ther I left I wol again beginne.

* * * * * * * * *

[1] Lap.
[2] Knew not.
[3] Cage.
[4] Velvets.
[5] Mentioned also in the *Legend of Good Women*, vs. 154, as an inconstant bird.

THE FRANKELEINES PROLOGUE.

10985–11010.

In faith, squier, thou hast thee wel yquit
And gentilly, I preise wel thy wit,
Quod the Frankelein; considering thin youthe,
So felingly thou spekest, sire, I aloue[1] the
As to my dome,[2] ther is non that is here,
Of eloquence that shal be thy pere,
If that thou live; God yeve thee goode chance,
And in vertue send thee continuance,
For of thy speking I have gret deintee.
I have a sone, and by the Trinitee
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
He were a man of swiche discretion,
As that ye ben: fie on possession,
But if a man be vertuous withal.
I have my sone snibbed,[3] and yet shal,
For he to vertue listeth not to entend,
But for to play at dis, and to dispend,
And lese all that he hath, is his usage;
And he had lever talken with a page,
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Ther he might leren gentillesse aright.
Straw for your gentillesse, quod our hoste.
What? Frankelein, parde, sire, wel thou wost,
That eche of you mote tellen at the lest
A tale or two, or breken his behest.
That know I wel, sire, quod the Frankelein,
I pray you haveth me not in disdein,
Though I to this man speke a word or two.
Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.
Gladly, sire hoste, quod he, I wol obey
Unto your will; now herkeneth what I sey;

[1] Allow. [2] Judgment. [3] Snubbed, reproved.

I wol you not contrarien in no wise,
As fer as that my wittes may suffice.
I pray to God that it may plesen you,
Than wot I wel that it is good ynow.

Thise olde gentil Bretons[1] in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes,
Rimeyed in hir firste Breton tonge;
Which layes with hir instruments they songe,
Or elles redden hem for hir plesance,
And on of hem have I in remembrance,
Which I shal sayn with good wille as I can.
But, sires, because I am a borel[2] man,
At my beginning first I you beseche
Have me excused of my rude speche.
I lerned never rhetorike certain;
Thing that I speke, it mote be bare and plain.
I slept never on the mount of Pernaso,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche as men die with or peinte;
Colours of rhetorike ben to me queinte;
My spirit feleth not of swiche matere.
But if you lust my tale shul ye here.

The Frankeleines Tale.

In Armorike, that called is Bretaigne,
Ther was a knight, that loved and did his peine
To serve a ladie in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a gret emprise
He for his lady wrought, or she were wonne:
For she was on the fairest under sonne,
And eke therto comen of so high kinrede.
That wel unnethes[3] durst this knight for drede
Tell hire his wo, his peine, and his distresse.
But at the last, she for his worthinesse,

[1] See Tyrwhitt's note, and Discourse, n. 24.
[2] Rude, plain. [3] Uneasily.

And namely for his meke obeysance,
Hath swiche a pitee caught of his penance,
That prively she fell of his accord
To take him for hire husbond and hire lord;
(Of swiche lordship as men han over hir wives)
And, for to lede the more in blisse hir lives,
Of his free will he swore hire as a knight,
That never in all his lif he day ne night
Ne shulde take upon him no maistrie
Agains hire will, ne kithe[1] hire jalousie,
But hire obey, and folwe hire will in al,
As any lover to his lady shal:
Save that the name of soverainetee
That wold he han for shame of his degree.
She thonked him, and with ful gret humblesse
She saide; sire, sin of your gentillesse
Ye profren me to have so large a reine,
Ne wolde God never betwix us tweine,
As in my gilt, were either werre or strif:
Sire, I wol be your humble trewe wif,
Have here my trouth, til that myn herte bresta
Thus ben they both in quiete and in reste.
For o thing, sires, saufly dare I seie,
That frendes everich other must obeie,
If they wol longe holden compagnie.
Love wol not be constreined by maistrie.
Whan maistrie cometh, the God of love anon
Beteth[2] his winges, and farewel, he is gon.
Love is a thing, as any spirit, free.
Women of kind desiren libertee,
And not to be constreined as a thral;
And so don men, if sothly I say shal.
Loke who that is most patient in love,
He is at his avantage all above.
Patience is an high vertue certain,
For it venquisheth, as thise clerkes sain,
Thinges that rigour never shulde atteine.
For every word men may not chide or pleine.
Lerneth to suffren, or, so mote I gon,
Ye shul it lerne whether ye wol or non.
For in this world certain no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or sayth somtime amis.

[1] Shew. [2] Maketh ready.

Ire, sikenesse, or constellation,
Win, wo, or changing of complexion,
Causeth ful oft to don amis or speken.
On every wrong a man may not be wreken.
After the time must be temperance
To every wight that can of governance.
And therfore hath this worthy wise knight
(To liven in ese) suffrance hire behight;
And she to him ful wisly gan to swere,
That never shuld ther be defaute in here.
Here may men seen an humble wise accord:
Thus hath she take hire servant and hire lord,
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.
Than was he both in lordship and servage?
Servage? nay, but in lordship al above,
Sin he hath both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wif also,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperitee,
Home with his wif he goth to his contree,
Not fer fro Penmark,[1] ther his dwelling was,
Wher as he liveth in blisse and in solas.
Who coude tell, but he had wedded be,
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee,
That is betwix an husbond and his wif?
A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,
Til that this knight, of which I spake of thus,
That of Cairrud[2] was cleped Arviragus,
Shope him to gon and dwelle a yere or twaine
In Englelond, that cleped was eke Bretaigne,
To seke in armes worship and honour:
(For all his lust he set in swiche labour)
And dwelte ther two yere; the book saith thus.
Now wol I stint of this Arviragus,
And speke I wol of Dorigene[3] his wif,
That loveth hire husbond as hire hertes lif.
For his absence wepeth she and siketh,
As don thise noble wives whan hem liketh;
She morneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, pleineth;[4]
Desir of his presence hire so distraineth,

[1] Upon the western coast of Bretagne, between Brest and Port L'Orient. It is derived from Pen, a mountain, and Mark, a boundary.
[2] Also a British word, signifying *the Red City*.
[3] Dorigen, or Dorguen, was the name of the wife of Alain I.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[4] Lamenteth.

That all this wide world she set at nought.
Hire frendes, which that knew hire hevy thought,
Comforten hire in all that ever they may;
They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day,
That causeles she sleth hireself, alas!
And every comfort possible in this cas
They don to hire, with all hir besinesse,
Al for to make hire leve hire hevinesse.
By processe, as ye knowen everich on,
Men mowe so longe graven in a ston,
Til som figure therin emprented be:
So long han they comforted hire, til she
Received hath, by hope and by reson,
The emprenting of hir consolation,
Thurgh which hire grete sorwe gan assuage;
She may not alway duren in swiche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare,
And that he wol come hastily again,
Or elles had this sorwe hire herte slain.
Hire frendes saw hire sorwe gan to slake,
And preiden hire on knees for Goddes sake,
To come and romen in hir compagnie,
Away to driven hire derke fantasie:
And finally she granted that request,
For wel she saw that it was for the best.
Now stood hire castel faste by the see,
And often with hire frendes walked she,
Hire to disporten on the bank an hie,
Wher as she many a ship and barge sie,
Sailing hir cours, wher as hem list to go.
But than was that a parcel of hire wo,
For to hireself ful oft, alas! said she,
Is ther no ship, of so many as I see,
Wol bringen home my lord? than were my herte
Al warished[1] of his bitter peines smerte.
Another time wold she sit and thinke,
And cast her eyen dounward fro the brinke;
But whan she saw the grisly rockes blake,
For veray fere so wold hire herte quake,
That on hire feet she might hire not sustene.
Than wold she sit adoun upon the grene,

[1] Healed.

And pitously into the see behold,
And say right thus, with careful sikes[1] cold.
Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveance
Ledest this world by certain governance,
In idel,[2] as men sain, ye nothing make.
But, lord, thise grisly fendly rockes blake,
That semen rather a foule confusion
Of werk, than any faire creation
Of swiche a parfit wise God and stable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable?
For by this werk, north, south, ne west, ne est,
Ther n'is yfostred man, ne brid, ne best:
It doth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye not, lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Han rockes slain, al be they not in mind;
Which mankind is so faire part of thy werk,
Thou madest it like to thyn owen merk.
Than, semeth it, ye had a gret chertee
Toward mankind; but how than may it be,
That ye swiche menes make it to destroyen?
Which menes don no good, but ever anoyen.
I wote wel, clerkes wol sain as hem lest
By arguments, that all is for the best,
Though I ne can the causes nought yknow;
But thilke God that made the wind to blow,
As kepe my lord, this is my conclusion:
To clerkes lete I all disputison:
But wolde God, that all thise rockes blake
Were sonken into helle for his sake.
Thise rockes slee min herte for the fere.
Thus wold she say with many a pitous tere.
Hire frendes saw that it was no disport
To romen by the see, but discomfort,
And shape hem for to plaien somwher elles.
They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
And eke in other places delitables;
They dancen and they play at ches and tables.
So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
Unto a gardin that was ther beside,
In which that they had made hir ordinance
Of vitaille, and of other purveance,

[1] Anxious sighs. [2] Vain.

They gon and plaie hem all the longe day:
And this was on the sixte morwe of May,
Which May had peinted with his softe shoures
This gardin ful of leves and of floures:
And craft of mannes hond so curiously
Arrayed had this gardin trewely,
That never was ther gardin of swiche pris,
But if it were the veray paradis.
The odour of floures, and the freshe sight,
Wold han ymaked any herte light
That ever was born, but if to gret sikenesse
Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse,
So ful it was of beautee and plesance.
And after dinner gonnen they to dance
And sing also, sauf Dorigene alone,
Which made alway hire complaint and hire mone,
For she ne saw him on the dance go,
That was hire husbond, and hire love also:
But nathlees she must a time abide,
And with good hope let hire sorwe slide.
Upon this dance, amonges other men,
Danced a squier before Dorigen,
That fresher was and jolier of array,
As to my dome,[1] than is the month of May.
He singeth, danceth, passing any man,
That is or was sin that the world began:
Therwith he was, if men shuld him discrive,
On of the beste faring men on live,
Yong, strong, and virtuous, and riche, and wise,
And wel beloved, and holden in gret prise.
And shortly, if the soth I tellen shal,
Unweting of this Dorigene at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Had loved hire best of any creature
Two yere and more, as was his aventure:
But never dorst he tell hire his grevance.
Withouten cup he dranke all his penance.
He was dispeired, nothing dorst he say,
Sauf in his songes somwhat wold he wray[2]
His wo, as in a general complaining;
He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.

[1] In my opinion. [2] Betray.

Of swiche matere made he many layes,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes;
How that he dorste not his sorwe telle,
But languisheth, as doth a furie[1] in helle;
And die he must, he said, as did Ecco
For Narcissus, that dorst not tell hire wo.
In other maner than ye here me say,
Ne dorst he not to hire his wo bewray,[2]
Saut that paraventure somtime at dances,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir observances,
It may wel be he loked on hire face
In swiche a wise, as man that axeth grace,
But nothing wiste she of his entent.
Natheles it happed, or they thennes went,
Because that he was hire neighebour,
And was a man of worship and honour,
And had yknowen him of time yore,
They fell in speche, and forth ay more and more
Unto his purpos drow Aurelius;
And whan he saw his time, he saide thus.
Madame, quod he, by God that this world made,
So that I wist it might your herte glade,
I wold that day, that your Arviragus
Went over see, that I Aurelius
Had went ther I shuld never come again;
For wel I wot my service is in vain,
My guerdon n'is but bresting of min herte.
Madame, rueth upon my peines smerte,
For with a word ye may me sleen or save.
Here at your feet God wold that I were grave.[3]
I ne have as now no leiser more to sey:
Have mercy, swete, or ye wol do me dey.
She gan to loke upon Aurelius;
Is this your will (quod she) and say ye thus?
Never erst (quod she) ne wist I what ye ment:
But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.
By thilke God that yaf me soule and lif,
Ne shal I never ben an untrewe wif
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit,
I wol ben his to whom that I am knit:

[1] Some MSS. read "fire." Neither word gives much meaning. Should it be, "as doth a *fende* in helle"?
[2] Discover. [3] Buried.

Take this for final answer as of me.
But after that in play thus saide she.
Aurelie (quod she) by high God above
Yet wol I granten you to ben your love,
(Sin I you see so pitously complaine)
Loke, what day that endelong Bretaigne
Ye remue all the rockes, ston by ston,
That they ne letten[1] ship ne bote to gon,
I say, whan ye han made the cost so clene
Of rockes, that ther n'is no ston ysene,
Than wol I love you best of any man,
Have here my trouth, in all that ever I can;
For wel I wote that it shal never betide.
Let swiche folie out of your herte glide.
What deintee shuld a man have in his lif
For to go love another mannes wif,
That hath hire body whan that ever him liketh?
Aurelius ful often sore siketh;
Is ther non other grace in you? quod he.
No, by that lord, quod she, that maked me.
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herd,
And with a sorweful herte he thus answerd.
Madame, quod he, this were an impossible.
Than moste I die of soden deth horrible.
And with that word he turned him anon.
Tho come hire other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and doun,
And nothing wist of this conclusioun,
But sodenly begonnen revel newe,
Til that the brighte sonne had lost his hewe,
For the orizont had reft the sonne his light;
(This is as much to sayn as it was night)
And home they gon in mirthe and in solas;
Sauf only wrecche Aurelius, alas!
He to his hous is gon with sorweful herte.
He saith, he may not from his deth asterte.
Him semeth, that he felt his herte cold.
Up to the heven his hondes gan he hold,
And on his knees bare he set him doun,
And in his raving said his orisoun.
For veray wo out of his wit he braide,[2]
He n'iste what he spake, but thus he saide;

[1] Hinder [2] Ran out of his senses.

With pitous herte his plaint hath he begonne
Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne.
He said; Apollo, God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yevest after thy declination
To eche of hem his time and his seson,
As that thin herbergh[1] changeth low and hie;
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable eie
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorne.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth ysworne
Withouten gilt, but thy benignitee
Upon my dedly herte have som pitee.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you lest,
Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.
Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise
How that I may be holpe and in what wise.
Your blisful suster, Lucina the shene,
That of the see is chief goddesse and quene,
Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,
Yet emperice aboven him is she:
Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hire desire
Is to be quiked[2] and lighted of your fire,
For which she folweth you ful besily,
Right so the see desireth naturelly
To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse
Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my request,
Do this miracle, or do min herte brest;
That now next at this opposition,
Which in the signe shal be of the Leon,
As preyeth hire[3] so gret a flood to bring,
That five fadome at the lest it overspring
The highest rock in Armorike Bretaigne,
And let this flood enduren yeres twaine:
Than certes to my lady may I say,
Holdeth your hest, the rockes ben away.
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
Prey hire she go no faster cours than ye;
I say this, preyeth your suster that she go
No faster cours than ye thise yeres two:
Than shal she ben even at ful alway,
And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.

[1] Lodging. [2] Quickened. [3] I pray you.

And but[1] she vouchesauf in swiche manere
To graunten me my soveraine lady dere,
Prey hire to sinken every rock adoun
Into hire owen derke regioun
Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth in,
Or nevermo shal I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke.
Lord Phebus, see the teres on my cheke,
And on my peine have som compassioun.
And with that word, in sorwe he fell adoun,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,[2]
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
Dispeired in this turment and this thought
Let I this woful creature lie,
Chese he for me whether he wol live or die.
Arviragus with hele[3] and gret honour
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That hast thy lusty husbond in thin armes,
The freshe knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his owen hertes lif:
Nothing list him to be imaginatif,
If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,
To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
He not entendeth to no swiche matere,
But danceth, justeth, and maketh mery chere.
And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwell,
And of the sike Aurelius wol I tell.
In langour and in turment furious
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,
Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
Ne comfort in this time ne had he non,
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of all this wo and all this werk;
For to non other creature certain
Of this matere he dorste no word sain;
Under his brest he bare it more secree,
Than ever did Pamphilus[4] for Galathee.
His brest was hole withouten for to seen,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene,

[1] Unless. [2] Suffering. [3] Health.
[4] A lover in some Latin poem of the time.

And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure[1]
In surgerie is perilous the cure,
But men might touch the arwe or come therby.
His brother wepeth and waileth prively,
Til at the last him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleaunce in France,
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
To reden artes that ben curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne[2]
Particuler sciences for to lerne,
He him remembred, that upon a day
At Orleaunce in studie a book he say
Of magike naturel, which his felaw,
That was that time a bacheler of law,
Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Had prively upon his desk ylaft;
Which book spake moche of operations
Touching the eight and twenty mansions
That longen to the Mone, and swiche folie
As in our dayes n'is not worth a flie:
For holy cherches feith, in our beleve,
Ne suffreth non illusion us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembrance,
Anon for joye his herte gan to dance,
And to himself he saied prively;
My brother shal be warished[3] hastily:
For I am siker[4] that ther be sciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thise subtil tregetoures[5] play.
For oft at festes have I wel herd say,

[1] A wound healed only outwardly.
[2] *I. e.*, in every corner, a proverbial expression.
[3] Cured. [4] Certain.
[5] In the time of Chaucer, the persons who sang and played were called, generally, *Minstrels;* while the name of *Jogelour* was, in a manner, appropriated to those, who, by sleight of hand and machines, produced such illusions of the senses as are usually supposed to be effected by enchantment: see above, ver. 7049. This species of *Jogelour* is here called a *Tregetour*. They are joined together in company with Magicians. H. of F. iii. 169.

Ther saw I playing *Jogelours*,
Magiciens and *Tragetours*,
And Phitonesses, Charmeresses——
And Clerkes eke which conne wel
All this *magike naturell*.——

See also the following ver. 187—191.
If we compare the feats of the *Tregetours*, as described in this passage,

That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Somtime hath semed come a grim leoun,
And somtime floures spring as in a mede,
Somtime a vine, and grapes white and rede,
Somtime a castel al of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth[1] it anon:
Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.
Now than conclude I thus, if that I might
At Orleaunce som olde felaw find,
That hath thise Mones mansions in mind,
Or other Magike naturel above,
He shuld wel make my brother have his love.

with those which are afterwards performed by the Clerkes *magike*, for the entertainment of his guests, ver. 11501—11519, we shall find them very similar; and they may both be illustrated by the following account which Sir John Mandevile has given of the exhibitions before the *Grete Chan*. "And than comen *Jogulours* and *Enchantoures*, that don many marvaylles: for they maken to come in the ayr the Sonne and the Mone, be seminge, to every mannes sight. And after they maken the nyght so derk, that no man may see no thing. And aftre they maken the day to come ayen fair and plesant with bright Sonne to every mannes sight. And than they bringen in *daunces* of the fayrest damyselles of the world and richest arrayed. And aftre they maken to comen in other damyselles, bringinge coupes of gold, fulle of mylk of dyverse bestes, and yeven drynke to lordes and to ladyes. And than they make *Knyghtes to jousten* in armes fulle lustyly; and they rennen togidre a gret randoum; and they frusschen togidere fulle fiercely; and they breken here speres so rudely, that the tronchouns flen in sprotes and peces alle aboute the Halle. And than they make to come in *huntyng* for the Hert and for the Boor, with houndes renning with open mouthe. And many other thinges they don be craft of hir enchauntements, that it is marveyle for to see. And suche playes of desport they make, til the taking up of the boordes." Mand. *Trav.* p. 285, 6. See also p. 261. "and wher it be by craft or by nygromancye, I wot nere."

The Glossary derives *Tregetour* from the BARB. LAT. *Tricator;* but the derivatives of that family are *tricheur*, *tricherie*, trick, &c. Nor can I find the word *Tregetour* in any language but our own. It seems clearly to be formed from *treget*, which is frequently used by Chaucer for *deceit, imposture*. R. R. 6267, 6312, 6825; and so is *tregetry*, ibid. 6374, 6382. From whence *treget* itself may have been derived is more difficult to say; but I observe, that *trebuchet*, the French name for a military engine, is called by Chaucer *trepeget*, R. R. 6279, and by Knighton, 2672, *trepget;* and that this same word *trebuchet*, in French, signified also a machine *for catching birds*. Du Cange, in v. TREPGET.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Departs, disappears.

For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes sight, that all the rockes blake
Of Bretaigne were yvoided everich on,
And shippes by the brinke comen and gon,
And in swiche forme endure a day or two:
Than were my brother warished of his wo,
Than must she nedes holden hire behest,
Or elles he shal shame hire at the lest.
What shuld I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bed he comen is,
And swiche comfort he yaf him, for to gon
To Orleaunce, that he up stert anon,
And on his way forthward than is he fare,
In hope for to ben lissed[1] of his care.
Whan they were come almost to that citee,
But if it were a two furlong or three,
A yonge clerk roming by himself they mette,
Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.
And after that he sayd a wonder thing:
I know, quod he, the cause of your coming:
And or they forther any foote went,
He told hem all that was in hir entent.
This Breton clerk him axed of telawes,
The which he had yknowen in olde dawes,
And he answered him that they dede were,
For which he wept ful often many a tere.
Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magicien is gon
Home to his hous, and made hem wel at ese:
Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem plese.
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,
Aurelius in his lif saw never non.
He shewed him, or they went to soupere,
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde dere.
Ther saw he hartes with hir hornes hie,
The gretest that were ever seen with eie.
He saw of hem an hundred slain with houndes,
And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.
He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,
Thise fauconers upon a faire rivere,
That with hir haukes han the heron slain.
Tho saw he knightes justen in a plain.

[1] Eased.

And after this he did him swiche plesance,
That he him shewed his lady on a dance,
On which himselven danced, as him thought.
And whan this maister, that this magike wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,
And farewel, al the revel is ago.
And yet remued they never out of the hous,
While they saw all thise sightes merveillous;
But in his studie, ther his bookes be,
They saten still, and no wight but they three.
To him this maister called his squier,
And sayd him thus, may we go to souper?
Almost an houre it is, I undertake,
Sin I you bade our souper for to make,
Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me
Into my studie, ther my bookes be.
Sire, quod this squier, whan it liketh you,
It is al redy, though ye wol right now.
Go we than soupe, quod he, as for the best,
Thise amorous folk somtime moste han rest.
At after souper fell they in tretee
What summe shuld this maisters guerdon be,
To remue all the rockes of Bretaigne,
And eke from Gerounde to the mouth of Saine.
He made it strange, and swore, so God him save,
Lesse than a thousand pound he wold not have,
Ne gladly for that summe he wold not gon.
Aurelius with blisful herte anon
Answered thus; fie on a thousand pound:
This wide world, which that men sayn is round,
I wold it yeve, if I were lord of it.
This bargaine is ful-drive, for we ben knit;
Ye shul be paied trewely by my trouth.
But loketh, for non negligence or slouth,
Ye tarie[1] us here no lenger than to morwe.
Nay, quod this clerk, have here my faith to borwe.
To bed is gon Aurelius whan him lest,
And wel nigh all that night he had his rest,
What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,
His woful herte of penance had a lisse.
Upon the morwe whan that it was day,
To Bretaigne token they the righte way,

[1] Detain.

Aurelie, and this magicien him beside,
And ben descended ther they wold abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde frosty seson of December.
Phebus waxe old, and hewed like laton,[1]
That in his hote declination
Shone as the burned gold, with stremes bright;
But now in Capricorne adoun he light,
Wher as he shone ful pale, I dare wel sain.
The bitter frostes with the sleet and rain
Destroyed han the grene in every yerd.
Janus sit by the fire with double berd,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Beforn him stant braune[2] of the tusked swine,
And *nowel*[3] crieth every lusty man.
Aurelius in all that ever he can,
Doth to his maister chere and reverence,
And praieth him to don his diligence
To bringen him out of his peines smerte,
Or with a swerd that he wold slit his herte.
This sotil clerk swiche routh hath on this man,
That night and day he spedeth him, that he can,
To wait a time of his conclusion;
This is to sayn, to make illusion,
By swiche an apparence or joglerie,
(I can no termes of Astrologie)
That she and every wight shuld wene and say,
That of Bretaigne the rockes were away,
Or elles they were sonken under ground.
So at the last he hath his time yfound
To make his japes and his wretchednesse
Of swiche a superstitious cursednesse.
His tables Toletanes[4] forth he brought
Ful wel corrected, that ther lacked nought,

[1] Was of a brass-like colour. [2] Brawn.

[3] Noel! derived from the Latin *Natalis*, a usual cry upon occasions of festivity and rejoicing.

[4] The Astronomical Tables, composed by order of Alphonso X., king of Castile, about the middle of the XIIIth Century, were called sometimes *Tabulæ Toletanæ*, from their being adapted to the city of Toledo. There is a very elegant copy of them in MS. Harl. 3647. I am not sufficiently skilled in the ancient Astronomy to add anything to the explanation of the following technical terms, drawn chiefly from those tables, which has been given in the Addit. to Gloss. Urt. v. Expans teres, p. 81, as follows:—

Nother his collect, ne his expans yeres,
Nother his rotes, ne his other geres,
As ben his centres, and his argumentes,
And his proportionel convenientes
For his equations in every thing.
And by his eighte speres in his werking,
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath[1] was shove
Fro the hed of thilke fix Aries above,
That in the ninthe spere considered is.
Ful sotilly he calculed all this.
Whan he had found his firste mansion,
He knew the remenant by proportion;
And knew the rising of his mone wel,
And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
And knew ful wel the mones mansion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew also his other observances,
For swiche illusions and swiche meschances,
As hethen folk used in thilke daies.
For which no lenger maketh he delaies,
But thurgh his magike, for a day or tway,
It semed all the rockes were away.
Aurelius, which that despeired is,
Whether he shal han his love, or fare amis,
Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:
And whan he knew that ther was non obstacle,
That voided were thise rockes everich on,
Doun to his maisters feet he fell anon,
And sayd; I woful wretch Aurelius,
Thanke you, my lord, and lady min Venus,

"In this and the following verses, the poet describes the Alphonsine Astronomical tables by the several parts of them, wherein some technical terms occur, which were used by the old astronomers, and continued by the compilers of those tables. *Collect* years are certain sums of years, with the motions of the heavenly bodies corresponding to them, as of 20, 40, 60, &c., disposed into tables; and *Expans* years are the single years, with the motions of the heavenly bodies answering to them, beginning at 1, and continued on to the smallest *Collect* sum, as 20, &c. A *Root*, or *Radix*, is any certain time taken at pleasure, from which, as an era, the celestial motions are to be computed. By *proporcionel convenientes* are meant the tables of proportional parts." Gloss. *Ur.* "*Argument* in astronomy is an arch whereby we seek another unknown arch proportional to the first."—*Chambers. Tyrwhitt.*

[1] The first star in the horns of Aries, whence the first mansion of the moon takes its name.

That me han holpen fro my cares cold.
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Theras he knew he shuld his lady see.
And whan he saw his time, anon right he
With dredful[1] herte and with ful humble chere
Salued hath his soveraine lady dere.
My rightful lady, quod this woful man,
Whom I most drede, and love, as I best can,
And lothest were[2] of all this world displese,
N'ere it that I for you have swiche disese,
That I must die here at your foot anon,
Nought wold I tell how me is wo begon.
But certes other must I die or plaine;
Ye sle me gilteles for veray peine.
But of my deth though that ye han no routh,
Aviseth you, or that ye breke your trouth:
Repenteth you for thilke God above,
Or ye me sle, because that I you love.
For, madame, wel ye wote what ye have hight;
Not that I chalenge any thing of right
Of you, my soveraine lady, but of grace;
But in a gardin yond, in swiche a place,
Ye wote right wel what ye behighten me,
And in myn hond your trouthe plighten ye,
To love me best; God wote ye saied so,
Although that I unworthy be therto;
Madame, I speke it for the honour of you,
More than to save my hertes lif right now:
I have don so as ye commanded me,
And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go see.
Doth as you list, have your behest in mind,
For quick or ded, right ther ye shul me find:
In you lith all to do me live or dey,
But wel I wote the rockes ben awey.
He taketh his leve, and she astonied stood;
In all hire face n'as o drope of blood:
She wened never han come in swiche a trappe.
Alas! quod she, that ever this shuld happe!
For wend I never by possibilitee,
That swiche a monstre or mervaille might be;
It is again the processe of nature.
And home she goth a sorweful creature,

[1] Doubtful. [2] Least willingly would.

For veray fere unnethes may she go.
She wepeth, waileth all a day or two,
And swouneth, that it routhe was to see:
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
For out of toun was gon Arviragus.
But to hireself she spake, and saied thus,
With face pale, and with ful sory chere,
In hire complaint, as ye shul after here.
Alas! quod she, on thee, fortune, I plain,[1]
That unware hast me wrapped in thy chain:
Fro which to escapen, wote[2] I no soccour,
Sauf only deth, or elles dishonour:
On of thise two behoveth me to chese.
But natheles, yet had I lever lese
My lif, than of my body have a shame,
Or know myselven false, or lese my name;
And with my deth I may be quit ywis.[3]
Hath ther not many a noble wif or this,
And many a maid yslaine hireself, alas!
Rather than with hire body don trespas?
Yes certes; lo, thise stories bere witnesse.[4]
Whan thirty tyrants ful of cursednesse
Had slain Phidon in Athens at the fest,
They commanded his doughtren for to arrest,
And bringen hem beforne hem in despit
Al naked, to fulfill hir foule delit;
And in hir fadres blood they made hem dance
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschance.
For which thise woful maidens ful of drede,
Rather than they wold lese hir maidenhede,
They prively ben stert into a welle,
And dreint hemselven, as the bookes telle.
They of Messene let enquere and seke
Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,
On which they wolden don hir lecherie:
But ther was non of all that compagnie
That she n'as slaine, and with a glad entent
Chees rather for to dien, than assent
To ben oppressed of hir maidenhede.
Why shuld I than to dien ben in drede?
Lo eke the tyrant Aristoclides,
That loved a maid hight Stimphalides,

[1] Lament. [2] Know. [3] Certainly.
[4] They are taken from Hieronymus *contra Jovin.* l. 39.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Whan that hire father slaine was on a night,
Unto Dianes temple goth she right,
And hente[1] the image in hire handes two,
Fro which image wold she never go,
No wight hire handes might of it arrace,[2]
Til she was slaine right in the selve place.
Now sin that maidens hadden swiche despit
To be defouled with mannes foule delit,
Wel ought a wif rather hireselven sle,
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.
What shal I sayn of Hasdrubales wif,
That at Cartage beraft hireself hire lif?
For whan she saw that Romains wan the toun,
She toke hire children all, and skipt adoun
Into the fire, and chees rather to die,
Than any Romain did hire vilanie.
Hath not Lucrece yslaine hireself, alas!
At Rome, whan that she oppressed was
Of Tarquine? for hire thought it was a shame
To liven, whan she hadde lost hire name.
The seven maidens of Milesie also
Han slaine hemself for veray drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gaule hem shuld oppresse.
Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Coude I now tell as touching this matere.
Whan Abradate was slain, his wif so dere
Hireselven slow, and let hire blood to glide
In Abradates woundes, depe and wide,
And sayd, my body at the leste way
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may.
What shuld I mo ensamples hereof sain?
Sin that so many han hemselven slain
Wel rather than they wold defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To sle myself than be defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or elles sle myself in some manere,
As did Demotiones doughter dere,
Because she wolde not defouled be.
O Sedasus, it is ful gret pitee
To reden how thy doughtren died, alas!
That slowe hemselven for swiche maner cas.

[1] Took seized. [2] Tear away.

As gret a pitee was it or wel more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nichanore
Hireselven slow, right for swiche manere wo.
Another Theban mayden did right so,
For on of Macedoine had hire oppressed,
She with hire deth hire maidenhed redressed.
What shal I sain of Nicerates wif,
That for swiche cas beraft hireself hire lif?
How trewe was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chees,
Than for to suffre his body unburied be?
Lo, which a wif was Alceste eke? (quod she)
What sayth Homere of good Penelope?
All Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.
Parde of Laodomia is written thus,
That whan at Troye was slain Prothesilaus,
No lenger wolde she live after his day.
The same of noble Portia tell I may;
Withouten Brutus coude she not live,
To whom she had all hol hire herte yeve.
The parfit wifhood of Artemisie
Honoured is thurghout all Barbarie.
O Teuta quene, thy wifly chastitee
To alle wives may a mirrour be.
Thus plained Dorigene a day or twey,
Purposing ever that she wolde dey;
But natheles upon the thridde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And axed hire why that she weep so sore:
And she gan wepen ever lenger the more.
Alas, quod she, that ever I was yborne!
Thus have I said, (quod she) thus have I sworne.
And told him all, as ye have herd before:
It nedeth not reherse it you no more.
This husbond with glad chere in frendly wise
Answerd and sayd, as I shal you devise.
Is ther ought elles, Dorigene, but this?
Nay, nay, quod she, God helpe me so, as wis
This is to much, and it were Goddes will.
Ye, wif, quod he, let slepen that is still,
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.
Ye shal your trouthe holden by my fay.
For God so wisly have mercy on me,
I had wel lever stiked for to be,

For veray love which that I to you have,
But if ye shuld your trouthe kepe and save.
Trouth is the hiest thing that man may kepe.
But with that word he brast anon to wepe,
And sayd; I you forbede on peine of deth,
That never while you lasteth lif or breth,
To no wight tell ye this misaventure.
As I may best I wol my wo endure.
Ne make no contenance of hevinesse,
That folk of you may demen harme or gesse.
And forth he cleped a squier and a maid.
Goth forth anon with Dorigene, he said,
And bringeth hire to swiche a place anon.
They take hir leve, and on hir way they gon:
But they ne wisten why she thider went,
She n'olde no wight tellen hire entent.
This squier, which that highte Aurelius,
On Dorigene that was so amorous,
Of aventure happed hire to mete
Amid the toun, right in the quikkest strete,
As she was boun[1] to go the way forthright
Toward the gardin, ther as she had hight.
And he was to the gardinward also;
For wel he spied whan she wolde go
Out of hire hous, to any maner place:
But thus they met of aventure or grace,
And he saluеth hire with glad entent,
And axeth of hire whiderward she went.
And she answered, half as she were mad,
Unto the gardin, as myn husbond bad,
My trouthe for to hold, alas! alas!
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte had gret compassion
Of hire, and of hire lamentation,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden all that she had hight,
So loth him was his wif shuld breke hire trouthe.
And in his herte he caught of it gret routhe,
Considering the best on every side,
That fro his lust yet were him lever abide,
Than do so high a cherlish wretchednesse
Ageins fraunchise,[2] and alle gentillesse;

[1] Ready. [2] Frankness.

For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.
Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That sin I see the grete gentillesse
Of him, and eke I see wel your distresse,
That him were lever have shame (and that were routhe)
Than ye to me shuld breken thus your trouthe,
I hadde wel lever ever to suffren wo,
Than to depart the love betwix you two.
I you relese, madame, into your hond
Quit every seurement and every bond,
That ye han made to me, as herebeforne,
Sin thilke time that ye were yborne.
Have here my trouthe, I shal you never repreve
Of no behest, and here I take my leve,
As of the trewest and the beste wif,
That ever yet I knew in all my lif.
But every wif beware of hire behest;
On Dorigene remembreth at the lest.
Thus can a squier don a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knight, withouten drede.
She thanketh him upon hire knees bare.
And home unto hire husbond is she fare.
And told him all, as ye han herd me sayd:
And, trusteth me, he was so wel apayd,
That it were impossible me to write.
What shuld I lenger of this cas endite?
Arviragus and Dorigene his wif
In soveraine blisse leden forth hir lif,
Never eft ne was ther anger hem betwene;
He cherished hire as though she were a quen
And she was to him trewe for evermore:
Of thise two folk ye get of me no more.
Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorne,
Curseth the time, that ever he was borne.
Alas! quod he, alas that I behight
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight
Unto this philosophre! how shal I do?
I see no more, but that I am fordo.
Min heritage mote I nedes sell,
And ben a begger, here I n'ill not dwell,
And shamen all my kinrede in this place,
But I of him may geten better grace.
But natheles I wol of him assay
At certain daies yere by yere to pay,

And thanke him of his grete curtesie.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lie.
With herte sore he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philosophre,
The value of five hundred pound I gesse,
And him besecheth of his gentillesse
To graunt him daies of the remenaunt,
And sayde; maister, I dare wel make avaunt,
I failled never of my trouthe as yet.
For sikerly my dette shal be quit
Towardes you, how so that ever I fare
To gon a begging in my kirtle bare:
But wold ye vouchen sauf upon seurtee
Two yere or three for to respiten me,
Than were I wel, for elles mote I sell,
Min heritage, ther is no more to tell.
This Philosophre sobrely answerd,
And saied thus, whan he thise wordes herd;
Have I not holden covenant to thee?
Yes certes, wel and trewely, quod he.
Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?
No, no, quod he, and sorwefully he siketh.
What was the cause? tell me if thou can.
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye han herd before,
It nedeth not reherse it any more.
He sayd, Arviragus of gentillesse
Had lever die in sorwe and in distresse,
Than that his wif were of hire trouthe fals.
The sorwe of Dorigene he told him als,
How loth hire was to ben a wicked wif,
And that she lever had lost that day hire lif;
And that her trouth she swore thurgh innocence;
She never erst hadde herd speke of apparence:
That made me han of hire so gret pitee,
And right as freely as he sent hire to me,
As freely sent I hire to him again:
This is all and som, ther n'is no more to sain.
The Philosophre answerd; leve brother,
Everich of you did gentilly to other:
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,
But God forbede to his blisful might,
But if a clerk coud don a gentil dede
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.

Sire, I relese thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crope[1] out of the ground,
Ne never er now ne haddest knowen me.
For, sire, I wol not take a peny of thee
For all my craft, ne nought for my travaille:
Thou hast ypaied wel for my vitaille.
It is ynough, and farewel, have good day.
And toke his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordings, this question wold I axen now,
Which was the moste free, as thinketh you?
Now telleth me, or that ye further wende.
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

[1] Had just crept.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

11929–11954.

Ye, let that passen, quod oure Hoste, as now.
Sire Doctour of Physike, I prey you,
Tell us a tale of som honest matere.
It shal be don, if that ye wol it here,
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.
Now, good men, quod he, herkeneth everich on.

The Doctoures Tale.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfilled of honour and worthinesse,
And strong of frendes, and of gret richesse.
This knight a doughter hadde by his wif.
No children had he mo in all his lif.
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see:
For nature hath with soveraine diligence
Yformed hire in so gret excellence,
As though she wolde sayn, lo, I nature,
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,
Whan that me list; who can me contrefete?
Pigmalion? not, though he ay forge and bete
Or grave, or peinte: for I dare wel sain,
Apelles, Xeuxis, shulden werche in vain,
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to contrefete.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath maked me his vicaire general

To forme and peinten erthly creatures
Right as me list, and eche thing in my cure is
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.
I made hire to the worship of my lord;
So do I all min other creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus semeth me that nature wolde say.
This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,
In which that nature hadde swiche delit.
For right as she can peint a lily whit
And red a rose, right with swiche peinture
She peinted hath this noble creature
Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Wheras by right swiche colours shulden be:
And Phebus died hath hire tresses grete,
Like to the stremes of his burned hete.
And if that excellent were hire beautee,
A thousand fold more vertuous was she.
In hire ne lacked no condition,
That is to preise, as by discretion.
As wel in gost as body, chast was she:
For which she floured in virginitee,
With all humilitee and abstinence,
With all attemperance and patience,
With mesure eke, of bering and array.
Discrete she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sain,
Hire facounde[1] eke ful womanly and plain,
No contrefeted termes hadde she
To semen wise; but after hire degree
She spake, and all hire wordes more and lesse
Sowning in vertue and in gentillesse.
Shamefast she was in maidens shamefastnesse,
Constant in herte, and ever in besinesse
To drive hire out of idel slogardie:
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maistrie.
For wine and youthe[2] don Venus encrese,
As men in fire wol casten oile and grese.
And of hire owen vertue unconstreined,
She hath hireself ful often sike yfeined,

[1] Eloquence, manner of speech.
[2] Tyrwhitt would read "slouthe," *i. e.*, sloth.

For that she wolde fleen the compagnie,
Wher likely was to treten of folie,
As is at festes, at revels, and at dances,
That ben occasions of daliances.
Swiche thinges maken children for to be
To sone ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al to sone may she lernen lore
Of boldnesse, whan she woxen is a wif.
And ye maistresses in your olde lif,
That lordes doughters han in governance,
Ne taketh of my wordes displesance:
Thinketh that ye ben set in governinges
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges;
Other for ye han kept your honestee,
Or elles for ye han fallen in freeltee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,
And han forsaken fully swiche meschance
For evermo: therfore for Cristes sake
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne slake.
A theef of venison, that hath forlaft
His likerousnesse, and all his olde craft,
Can kepe a forest best of any man:
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can.
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for your wikke entent,
For who so doth, a traytour is certain:
And taketh kepe of that I shal you sain;
Of alle treson soveraine pestilence
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye han children, be it on or mo,
Your is the charge of all hir surveance,
While that they ben under your governance.
Beth ware, that by ensample of your living,
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That they ne perish: for I dare wel saye,
If that they don, ye shul it dere abeye.
Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a shepe and lamb to-rent.
Sufficeth this ensample now as here,
For I mote turne agen to my matere.

[1] Beware.

This maid, of which I tell my tale expresse,
She kept hireself, hire neded no maistresse;
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,
As in a book, every good word and dede,
That longeth to a maiden vertuous:
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprong on every side
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide:
That thurgh the lond they preised hire ech one,
That loved vertue, sauf envie alone,
That sory is of other mannes wele,
And glad is of his sorwe and his unhele.
The doctour maketh this descriptioun.
This maiden on a day went in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mother[1] dere,
As is of yonge maidens the manere.
Now was ther than a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun:
And so befell, this juge his eyen cast
Upon this maid, avising hire ful fast,
As she came forth by ther this juge stood:
Anon his herte changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,
And to himself ful prively he said,
This maiden shal be min for any man.
Anon the fend into his herte ran,
And taught him sodenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to spede
For she was strong of frendes, and eke she
Confermed was in swiche soveraine bountee,
That wel he wist he might hire never winne,
As for to make hire with hire body sinne.
For which with gret deliberatioun
He sent after a cherl was in the toun,
The which he knew for sotil and for bold.[2]
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told
In secree wise, and made him to ensure,
He shulde tell it to no creature,

[1] Rather "her nurse." But Chaucer has deserted Livy and the old writers so frequently in this narrative, that it is of little use to notice the discrepancies.

[2] Either for cunning or force.

And if he did, he shulde lese his hede.
And whan assented was this cursed rede,
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,
And yaf him yeftes precious and dere.
Whan shapen was all hir conspiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie
Parformed shulde be ful sotilly,
As ye shul here it after openly,
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Appius,
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for an historial thing notable;
The sentence of it soth is out of doute)
This false juge goth now fast aboute
To hasten his delit all that he may.
And so befell, sone after on a day
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,
And yaf his domes[1] upon sondry cas;
This false cherl came forth a ful gret pas,
And saide; lord, if that it be your will,
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,
In which I plaine upon Virginius.
And if that he wol sayn it is not thus,
I wol it preve, and finden good witnesse,
That soth is that my bille wol expresse.
The juge answerd, of this in his absence
I may not yeve diffinitif sentence.
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here;
Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.
Virginius came to wete the juges will,
And right anon was red this cursed bill;
The sentence of it was as ye shul here.
To you, my lord sire Appius so dere,
Sheweth your poure servant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,
Holdeth, expresse agein the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thral by right,
Which from min hous was stolen on a night
While that she was ful yong, I wol it preve
By witnesse, lord, so that it you not greve;

[1] Gave judgment.

She n'is his doughter nought, what so he say.
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.
Virginius gan upon the cherl behold;
But hastily, er he his tale told,
And wold han preved it, as shuld a knight,
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,
That all was false, that said his adversary,
This cursed juge wolde nothing tary,
Ne here a word more of Virginius,
But yave his jugement, and saide thus.
I deme anon this cherl his servant have.
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hire save.
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.
The cherl shal have his thral; thus I award.
And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh sentence of this justice Appius,
Muste by force his dere doughter yeven
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,
He goth him home, and set him in his hall,
And let anon his dere doughter call:
And with a face ded as ashen cold,
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,
With fadres pitee stiking thurgh his herte,
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.
Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,
Ther ben two waies, other deth or shame,
That thou must suffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherfore
To dien with a swerd or with a knif.
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,
Which I have fostred up with swiche plesance,
That thou were never out of my remembrance:
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lif my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in patience
Take thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;
For love and not for hate thou must be ded,
My pitous hond must smiten of thin hed.
Alas that ever Appius thee say!
Thus hath he falsely juged thee to-day.
And told hire all the cas, as ye before
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.

O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.
And with that word she both hire armes laid
About his necke, as she was wont to do,
(The teres brast out of hire eyen two,)
And said, O goode father, shal I die?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie?
No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.
Than yeve me leiser, father min, quod she,
My deth for to complaine a litel space:
For parde Jepte yave his doughter grace
For to complaine, or he hire slow, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was hire trespas,
But for she ran hire father first to see,
To welcome him with gret solempnitee.
And with that word she fell aswoune anon,
And after, whan hire swouning was agon,
She riseth up, and to hire father said:
Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a shame.
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.
And with that word she praied him ful oft.
That with his swerd he wolde smite hire soft;
And with that word, aswoune again she fell.
Hire father, with ful sorweful herte and will,
Hire hed of smote, and by the top it hent,
And to the juge he gan it to present,
As he sat yet in dome in consistorie.
And whan the juge it saw, as saith the storie,
He bad to take him, and anhang him fast.
But right anon a thousand peple in thrast
To save the knight, for routh and for pitee,
For knowen was the false iniquitee.
The peple anon had suspect in this thing
By maner of the cherles chalenging,
That it was by the assent of Appius;
They wisten wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And caste him in a prison right anon,
Wheras he slow himself: and Claudius,
That servant was unto this Appius,
Was demed for to hange upon a tree;
But that Virginius of his pitee
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes had he ben begiled:

The remenant were anhanged, more and lesse,
That were consentant of this cursednesse.
Here men may see how sin hath his merite:
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol smite
In no degree, ne in which maner wise
The worme of conscience may agrise
Of wicked lif, though it so privee be,
That no man wote therof, sauf God and he:
For be he lewed man or elles lered,
He n'ot how sone that he shal ben afered.
Therfore I rede you this conseil take,
Forsaketh sinne, or[1] sinne you forsake.

[1] Before that.

THE PARDONERES PROLOGUE.

12221–12250.

Our Hoste gan to swere as he were wood;
Harow! (quod he) by nailes and by blood,
This was a false cherl, and a false justice.
As shameful deth, as herte can devise,
Come to thise juges and hir advocas.
Algate this sely[1] maide is slain, alas!
Alas! to dere abought she hire beautee.
Wherfore I say, that al day man may see,
That yeftes of fortune and of nature
Ben cause of deth to many a creature.
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dare wel sain;
Alas! so pitously as she was slain.
Of bothe yeftes, that I speke of now,
Men han ful often more for harm than prow.[2]
But trewely, min owen maister dere,
This was a pitous tale for to here:
But natheles, passe over, is no force.
I pray to God so save thy gentil corps,
And eke thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,
Thin Ypocras,[3] and eke thy Galianes,[4]
And every boist[5] ful of thy letuarie,
God blesse hem and our lady Seinte Marie.
So mote I the,[6] thou art a propre man,
And like a prelat by Seint Ronian;
Said I not wel? I cannot speke in terme;[7]
But wel I wot, thou dost min herte to erme,
That I have almost caught a cardiacle:[8]
By *corpus domini* but I have triacle,[9]
Or elles a draught of moist and corny[10] ale,
Or but I here anon a mery tale,

[1] Innocent. [2] Profit. [3] Hippocrates.
[4] Galen. [5] Box, chest. [6] Thrive.
[7] *I.e.*, in elaborate phraseology.
[8] A pain or spasm about the region of the heart.
[9] *Theriaque*, a remedy. [10] Well-malted.

Myn herte is lost for pitee of this maid.
Thou *bel amy*, thou pardoner, he said,
Tel us som mirth of japes right anon.
It shal be don, quod he. by Seint Ronion.
But first (quod he) here at this ale-stake
I wol both drinke, and biten on a cake.
But right anon thise gentiles gan to crie;
Nay, let him tell us of no ribaudrie,
Tel us som moral thing. that we mow lere,
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.
I graunte ywis, quod he, but I must thinke
Upon som honest thing, while that I drinke.

The Pardoneres Tale.

Lordings, quod he, in chirche whan I preche,
I peine me to have an hautein speche,
And ring it out. as round as goth a bell,
For I can[1] all by rote that I tell.
My teme[2] is alway on, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.[3]
First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And than my bulles shew I all and some:
Our liege lordes sele on my patente,
That shew I first my body to warrente,
That no man be so bold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to disturbe of Cristes holy werke.
And after that than tell I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,
Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe,
And in Latin I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron[4] with my predication,
And for to stere men to devotion.
Than shew I forth my longe cristal stones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones,
Relikes they ben, as wenen they echon.
Than have I in laton a shulder bone,

[1] Ken, know.
[2] Theme.
[3] Cupidity, avarice, is the root of evils.
[4] Colour, flavour.

Which that was of an holy Jewes shepe.
Good men, say I, take of my wordes kepe:
If that this bone be washe in any well,
If cow, or calf, or shepe, or oxe swell,
That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,
Take water of that well, and wash his tonge,
And it is hole anon: and forthermore
Of pockes, and of scab, and every sore
Shal every shepe be hole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take kepe of that I tell.
If that the good man, that the bestes oweth,[1]
Wol every weke, er that the cok him croweth,
Fasting ydrinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our eldres taught,
His bestes and his store shal multiplie.
And, sires, also it heleth jalousie.
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Let maken with this water his potage,
And never shal he more his wif mistrist,
Though he the soth of hire defaute wist;
Al had she taken preestes two or three.
Here is a mitaine[2] eke, that ye may see:
He that his hand wol put in this mitaine,
He shal have multiplying of his graine,
Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
So that he offer pens[3] or elles grotes.
And, men and women, o thing warne I you:
If any wight be in this chirche now,
That hath don sinne horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it yshriven be:
Or any woman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymade hire husbond cokewold,
Swiche folk shul han no power ne no grace
To offer to my relikes in this place.
And who so findeth him out of swiche blame,
He wol come up and offer in Goddes name,
And I assoyle[4] him by the auctoritee,
Which that by bulle ygranted was to me.
By this gaude[5] have I wonnen yere by yere
An hundred mark, sin I was pardonere.
I stonde like a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,

[1] Owneth. [2] Mitten, glove. [3] Pence.
[4] Absolve. [5] Trick.

I preche so as ye han herd before,
And tell an hundred false japes more.
Than peine I me to stretchen forth my necke,
And est and west upon the peple I becke,
As doth a dove, sitting upon a berne:
Myn hondes and my tonge gon so yerne,[1]
That it is joye to see my besinesse.
Of avarice and of swiche cursednesse
Is all my preching, for to make hem free
To yeve hir pens, and namely unto me.
For min entente is not but for to winne,
And nothing for correction of sinne.
I recke never whan that they be beried,
Though that hir soules gon a blake beried.[2]
For certes many a predication
Cometh oft time of evil entention;
Som for plesance of folk, and flaterie,
To ben avanced by hypocrisie;
And som for vaine glorie, and som for hate.
For whan I dare non other wayes debate,
Than wol I sting him with my tonge smerte
In preching, so that he shal not asterte
To ben defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespassed to my brethren or to me.
For though I telle not his propre name,
Men shal wel knowen that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus quite I folk, that don us displesances.
Thus spit I out my venime under hewe
Of holinesse, to seme holy and trewe.
But shortly min entente I wol devise,
I preche of nothing but for covetise.
Therfore my teme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preche again the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be gilty in that sinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne[3]

[1] Quickly.

So all the MSS., I think, except Ask. 2, which reads "on blake be ryed." Skinner explains *blakeberied* to mean *in nigras et inauspicatas domos mittus.* I really cannot guess what it means.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Turn.

From avarice, and sore hem to repente.
But that is not my principal entente;
I preche nothing but for covetise.
Of this matere it ought ynough suffise.
Than tell I hem ensamples many on
Of olde stories longe time agon.
For lewed[1] peple loven tales olde;
Swiche thinges can they wel report and holde.
What? trowen ye, that whiles I may preche
And winnen gold and silver for I teche,
That I wol live in poverte wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and beg in sondry londes,
I wol not do no labour with min hondes,
Ne make baskettes for to live therby,
Because I wol not beggen idelly.
I wol non of the apostles contrefete:
I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the pourest page,
Or of the pourest widewe in a village:
Al shulde hire children sterven[2] for famine.
Nay, I wol drinke the licour of the vine,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkeneth, lordings, in conclusioun,
Your liking is that I shal tell a tale.
Now I have dronke a draught of corny ale,
By God I hope I shal you tell a thing,
That shal by reson ben at your liking:
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellen can.
Which I am wont to prechen, for to winne.
Now hold your pees, my tale I wol beginne.

In Flandres whilom was a compagnie
Of yonge folk, that haunteden folie,
As hasard, riot, stewes, and tavernes;
Wheras with harpes, lutes, and giternes,
They dance and plaie at dis bothe day and night,
And ete also, and drinke over hir might;
Thurgh which they don the devil sacrifice
Within the devils temple, in cursed wise,

[1] Ignorant, simple. [2] Die.

By superfluitee abhominable.
Hir othes ben so gret and so damnable,
That it is grisly for to here hem swere.
Our blisful lordes body they to-tere;
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ynough;
And eche of hem at others sinne lough.
And right anon in comen tombesteres[1]
Fetis[2] and smale, and yonge fruitesteres,[3]
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,[4]
Which ben the veray devils officeres,
To kindle and blow the fire of lecherie,
That is annexed unto glotonie.
The holy writ take I to my witnesse,
That luxurie is in wine and dronkenesse.
Lo, how that dronken Loth unkindely[5]
Lay by his daughters two unwetingly,
So dronke he was he n'iste[6] what he wrought.
Herodes, who so wel the stories sought,
Whan he of wine replete was at his feste,
Right at his owen table he yave his heste
To sleen the Baptist John ful gilteles.
Seneca saith a good word douteles:
He saith he can no difference find
Betwix a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whiche that is dronkelew:
But that woodnesse,[7] yfallen in a shrew,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.
O glotonie, full of cursednesse;
O cause first of our confusion,
O original of our damnation,
Til Crist had bought us with his blood again.
Loketh, how dere, shortly for to sain,
Abought was thilke cursed vilanie:
Corrupt was all this world for glotonie.
Adam our father, and his wif also,
Fro Paradis, to labour and to wo,
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.
For while that Adam fasted, as I rede,[8]
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Ete of the fruit defended on a tree,

[1] Female dancers. [2] Neat. [3] Fruit-sellers.
[4] Sellers of wafers, or cakes. [5] Unnaturally.
[6] Knew not. [7] Madness. [8] Doubt.

Anon he was out cast to wo and peine.
O glotonie, on thee wel ought us plaine.
O, wist a man how many maladies
Folwen of excesse and of glotonies,
He wolde ben the more mesurable
Of his diete, sitting at his table.
Alas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh that Est and West, and North and South,
In erthe, in air, in water, men to-swinke,[1]
To gete a gloton deintee mete and drinke.
Of this matere, O Poule, wel canst thou trete.
Mete unto wombe, and wombe eke unto mete
Shal God destroien bothe, as Paulus saith.
Alas! a foule thing is it by my faith
To say this word, and fouler is the dede,
Whan man so drinketh of the white and rede,
That of his throte he maketh his privee
Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
The Apostle saith[2] weping ful pitously,
Ther walken many, of which you told have I,
I say it now weping with pitous vois,
That they ben enemies of Cristes crois:
Of whiche the end is deth, womb is hir God.
O wombe, O belly, stinking is thy cod,[3]
Fulfilled of dong and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foule is the soun.
How gret labour and cost is thee to find!
Thise cokes how they stamp, and strein, and grind,
And turnen substance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocken they
The mary,[4] for they casten nought away,
That may go thurgh the gullet soft and soto:
Of spicerie, of leef, of barke, and rote,[5]
Shal ben his sause ymaked by delit
To make him yet a newer appetit.
But certes he, that haunteth swiche delices,
Is ded, while that he liveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thing is wine, and dronkenesse
Is ful of striving and of wretchednesse.
O dronken man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to enbrace:

[1] Toil. [2] Philipp. iii. 18. [3] Bag.
[4] Marrow. [5] Root.

And thurgh thy dronken nose semeth the soun,
As though thou saidest ay, Sampsoun, Sampsoun:
And yet, God wot, Sampsoun dronk never no wine.
Thou fallest, as it were a stiked swine:
Thy tonge is lost, and all thin honest cure,
For dronkenesse is veray sepulture
Of mannes wit, and his discretion.
In whom that drinke hath domination,
He can no conseil kepe, it is no drede.
Now kepe you fro the white and fro the rede,
And namely fro the white wine of Lepe,[1]
That is to sell in Fishstrete and in Chepe.
This wine of Spaigne crepeth subtilly
In other wines growing faste by,
Of which ther riseth swiche fumositee.
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Not at the Rochell, ne at Burdeux toun;
And thanne wol he say, Sampsoun, Sampsoun.
But herkeneth, lordings, o word, I you pray,
That all the soveraine actes, dare I say,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Thurgh veray God, that is omnipotent,
Were don in abstinence and in prayere:
Loketh the Bible, and ther ye mow it lere.
Loke Attila, the grete conquerour,
Died in his slepe, with shame and dishonour,
Bleding ay at his nose in dronkenesse:
A capitaine shulde live in sobrenesse.
And over all this, aviseth you right wel,
What was commanded unto Lamuel;

[1] According to the geographers, Lepe was not far from Cadiz. This wine, of whatever sort it may have been, was probably much stronger than the Gascon wines, usually drunk in England. La Rochelle and Bourdeaux, ver. 12505, the two chief ports of Gascony, were both, in Chaucer's time, part of the English dominions.

Spanish wines might also be more alluring upon account of their greater rarity. Among the orders of the royal household, in 1604, is the following (MS. *Harl.*, 293, fol. 162):—"And whereas, in tymes past, Spanish wines, called Sacke, were little or noe whit used in our courte, and that in later years, though not of ordinary allowance, it was thought convenient that noblemen, &c., might have a boule or glass, &c. We, understanding that it is now used as common drinke, &c., reduce the allowance to XII gallons a day for the court, &c."—*Tyrwhitt.*

Not Samuel, but Lamuel say I.
Redeth the Bible,[1] and find it expresly
Of wine yeving to hem that have justice.
No more of this, for it may wel suffice.
And now that I have spoke of glotonie,
Now wol I you defenden hasardrie.
Hasard is veray moder of lesinges,
And of deceite, and cursed forsweringes:
Blaspheming of Crist, manslaughter, and wast also
Of catel, and of time; and forthermo
It is repreve, and contrary of honour,
For to ben hold a commun hasardour.
And ever the higher he is of estat,
The more he is holden desolat.
If that a Prince useth hasarderie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by commun opinion,
Yhold the lesse in reputation.
Stilbon,[2] that was a wise embassadour,
Was sent to Corinth with ful gret honour
Fro Calidone, to maken hem alliance:
And whan he came, it happed him *par chance*,
That all the gretest that were of that lond
Yplaying atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as sone as that it mighte be,
He stale him home agein to his contree,
And sayde ther, I wol not lese my name,
Ne wol not take on me so gret defame,
You for to allie unto non hasardours.
Sendeth som other wise embassadours,
For by my trouthe, me were lever die,
Than I you shuld to hasardours allie.
For ye, that ben so glorious in honours,
Shal not allie you to non hasardours,
As by my wille, ne as by my tretee.
This wise philosophre thus sayd he.

[1] Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

[2] John of Salisbury, from whom our author probably took this story and the following, calls him *Chilon*. Polycrat. L. i. c. 5. Chilon Lacedæmonius, jungendæ societatis causâ missus Corinthum, duces et seniores populi ludentes invenit in aleâ. Infecto itaque negotio reversus est, &c. Accordingly, in ver. 12539, MS. C. 1., reads very rightly *Lacedomye* instead of *Calidone*, the common reading. Our author has used before *Lacedomie* for *Lacedæmon*, ver. 11692.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Loke eke how to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book sayth us,
Sent him a pair of dis of gold in scorne,
For he had used hasard therbeforne:
For which he held his glory and his renoun
At no value or reputatioun.
Lordes may finden other maner play
Honest ynough to drive the day away.
Now wol I speke of others false and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,
And false swering is yet more reprevable.
The highe God forbad swering at al,
Witnesse on Mathew: but in special
Of swering sayth the holy Jeremie,
Thou shalt swere soth thin othes, and not lie;
And swere in dome,[1] and eke in rightwisnesse·
But idel swering is a cursednesse.
Behold and see, that in the firste table
Of highe Goddes hestes honourable,
How that the second hest of him is this,
Take not my name in idel or amis.
Lo, rather he forbedeth swiche swering,
Than homicide, or many an other thing.
I say that as by ordre thus it stondeth;
This knoweth he that his hestes understondeth;
How that the second hest of God is that.
And forthermore, I wol thee tell all plat,
That vengeance shal not parten from his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,[2]
And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hailes,[3]

[1] Judgment.

[2] *I. e.*, with which he was nailed to the cross. Sir J. Mandevile, c vii. "And thereby in the walle is the place where the four nayles of our Lord weren hidd; for he had two in his hondes and two in his feet: and of one of theise the Emperour of Costantynoble made a brydille to his hors, to bere him in bataylle; and thorgh vertue thereof he overcame his enemies," &c. He had said before, c. ii. that "on of the nayles that Crist was naylled with on the cross," was at Constantynoble; and "on in France, in the kinges chapelle."—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] The Abbey of Hailes, in Glocestershire, was founded by Richard, king of the Romans, brother to Henry III. This precious relick, which was afterwards commonly called "the blood of Hailes," was brought out of Germanie by the son of Richard, Edmund, who bestowed a third

Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treyo:
By Goddes armes, if thou falsely pleye,
This dagger shal thurghout thin herte go.
This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two,[1]
Forswering, ire, falsenesse, and homicidé.
Now for the love of Crist that for us dide,
Leteth[2] your othes, bothe gret and smale.
But, sires, now wol I tell you forth my tale.
Thise riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long erst or prime rong of any bell,
Were set hem in a taverne for to drinke:
And as they sat, they herd a belle clinke
Beforn a corps, was caried to his grave:
That on of hem gan callen to his knave,
Go bet, quod he, and axe redily,
What corps is this, that passeth here forth by:
And loke that thou report his name wel.
Sire, quod this boy, it nedeth never a del;
It was me told or ye came here two houres;
He was parde an old felaw of youres,
And sodenly he was yslain to-night,
Fordronke as he sat on his benche upright,
Ther came a privee theef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contree all the peple sleth,
And with his spere he smote his herte atwo,
And went his way withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slain this pestilence:
And, maister, or ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were tul necessarie,
For to beware of swiche an adversarie:
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say no more.

part of it upon his father's Abbey of Hailes, and sometime after gave the other two parts to an Abbey of his own foundation at Ashrug near Berkhamsted. Hollinsh. v. ii. p. 275.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] The common reading is *thilke* bones. The alteration, which I have ventured to make, is not authorized entirely by any MS., but in part by several. *Bickel.* as explained by Kilian, is *Talus*, ovillus et lusorius: and *Bickelen*, talis ludere. See also Had. Junii Nomencl. n. 213. Our dice indeed are the ancient *tesseræ*, not *tali*; but, both being games of hazard, the implements of one might be easily attributed to the other. It should seem from Junius, loc. cit. that the Germans had preserved the custom of playing with the natural bones, as they have different names for a game with *tali ovilli*; and another with *tali tabuli*.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Forbeur.

By Seinte Marie, sayd this taverneere,
The child sayth soth, for he hath slain this yere
Hens over a mile, within a gret village,
Both man and woman, child, and hyne,[1] and page
I trowe his habitation be there:
To ben avised gret wisdome it were,
Or that he did a man a dishonour.
Ye, Goddes armes, quod this riotour,
Is it swiche peril with him for to mete?
I shal him seke by stile and eke by strete.
I make a vow by Goddes digne bones.
Herkeneth, felawes, we three ben all ones:
Let eche of us hold up his hond to other,
And eche of us becomen others brother,
And we wol slen this false traitour deth:
He shal be slain, he that so many sleth,
By Goddes dignitee, or it be night.
Togeder han thise three hir trouthes plight
To live and dien eche of hem for other,
As though he were his owen boren brother.
And up they stert al dronken in this rage,
And forth they gon towardes that village,
Of which the taverner had spoke beforn,
And many a grisly oth than have they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rent;
Deth shal be ded, if that we may him hent.
Whan they han gon not fully half a mile,
Right as they wold han troden over a stile,
An olde man and a poure with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And sayde thus; Now, lordes, God you see.
The proudest of thise riotoures three
Answerd agen; What? cherl, with sory grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped save thy face?
Why livest thou so longe in so gret age?
This olde man gan loke in his visage,
And sayde thus; For I ne cannot finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde,
Neither in citee, ne in no village,
That wolde change his youthe for min age;
And therfore mote I han min age still
As longe time as it is Goddes will.

[1] Hind. servant, husbandman.

Ne deth, alas! ne will not han my lif.
Thus walke I like a resteles caitif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate
I knocke with my staf, erlich and late,
And say to hire, Leve mother, let me in.
Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin:
Alas! whan shul my bones ben at reste?
Mother, with you wold I changen my cheste,
That in my chambre longe time hath be,
Ye, for an heren[1] clout to wrap in me.
But yet to me she wol not don that grace,
For which ful pale and welked[2] is my face.
But, sires, to you it is no curtesie
To speke unto an olde man vilanie,
But he trespase in word or elles in dede.
In holy writ ye moun yourselven rede;
Ageins[3] an olde man, hore upon his hede,
Ye shuld arise: therfore I yeve you rede,
Ne doth unto an olde man non harm now,
No more than that ye wold a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, wher ye go or ride.
I moste go thider as I have to go.
Nay, olde cherl, by God thou shalt not so,
Sayde this other hasardour anon;
Thou partest not so lightly by Seint John.
Thou spake right now of thilke traitour deth,
That in this contree all our frendes sleth;
Have here my trouth as thou art his espie;
Tell wher he is, or thou shalt it abie,
By God and by the holy Sacrement;
For sothly thou art on of his assent
To slen us yonge folk, thou false thefe.
Now, sires, quod he, if it be you so lefe
To finden deth, tourne up this croked way,
For in that grove I left him by my fay
Under a tree, and ther he wol abide;
Ne for your bost[4] he wol him nothing hide.
Se ye that oke? right ther ye shuln him find.
God save you, that bought agen mankind,
And you amende; thus sayd this olde man.
And everich of thise riotoures ran,

[1] Hairy, [2] Withered.
[3] Before. [4] Pride, boasting.

Til they came to the tree, and ther they found
Of Floreins fine of gold ycoined round,
Wel nigh an eighte bushels, as hem thought.
No lenger as than after dethe they sought,
But eche of hem so glad was of the sight,
For that the floreins ben so faire and bright,
That doun they sette hem by the precious hord.
The werste of hem he spake the firste word.
Brethren, quod he, take kepe what I shal say;
My wit is gret, though that I bourde[1] and play.
This tresour hath fortune unto us yeven
In mirth and jolitee our lif to liven,
And lightly as it cometh, so wol we spend.
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee, who wend
To-day, that we shuld han so faire a grace?
But might this gold be caried fro this place
Home to myn hous, or elles unto youres,
(For wel I wote that all this gold is oures)
Thanne were we in high felicitee.
But trewely by day it may not be;
Men wolden say that we were theeves strong,
And for our owen tresour don us hong.
This tresour must ycaried be by night
As wisely and as sleighly as it might.
Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle
We drawe, and let see wher the cut wol falle:
And he that hath the cut, with herte blith,
Shal rennen to the toun, and that ful swith,[2]
And bring us bred and win ful privelý:
And two of us shal kepen subtilly
This tresour wel: and if he wol not tarien,
Whan it is night, we wol this tresour carien
By on assent, wher as us thinketh best.
That on of hem the cut brought in his fest,
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wold falle,
And it fell on the yongest of hem alle:
And forth toward the toun he went anon.
And al so sone as that he was agon,
That on of hem spake thus unto that other;
Thou wotest wel thou art my sworen brother,
Thy profite wol I tell thee right anon.
Thou wost wel that our felaw is agon,

[1] Jest. [2] Quickly

And here is gold, and that ful gret plentee,
That shal departed ben among us three.
But natheles, if I can shape it so,
That it departed were among us two,
Had I not don a frendes turn to thee?
That other answerd, I n'ot how that may be:
He wote wel that the gold is with us tweye.
What shuln we don? what shuln we to him seye?
Shal it be conseil? sayd the firste shrewe;
And I shal tellen thee in wordes fewe
What we shul don, and bring it wel aboute.
I grante, quod that other, out of doute,
That by my trouth I wol thee not bewreie.[1]
Now, quod the first, thou wost wel we ben tweie,
And tweie of us shul strenger be than on.
Loke, whan that he is set, thou right anon
Arise, as though thou wóldest with him play;
And I shal rive him thurgh the sides tway,
While that thou stroglest with him as in game,
And with thy dagger loke thou do the same;
And than shal all this gold departed be,
My dere frend, betwixen thee and me:
Than moun we bothe our lustes al fulfille,
And play at dis right at our owen wille.
And thus accorded ben thise shrewes tweye,
To slen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.
This yongest, which that wente to the toun,
Ful oft in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thise floreins newe and bright.
O Lord, quod he, if so were that I might
Have all this tresour to myself alone,
Ther n'is no man that liveth under the trone
Of God, that shulde live so mery as I.
And at the last the fend our enemy
Putte in his thought, that he shuld poison beye,[2]
With which he mighte slen his felaws tweye.
For why, the fend fond him in swiche living,
That he had leve to sorwe him to bring.
For this was outrely his ful entente
To slen hem both, and never to repente.
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,
Into the toun unto a Potecary,

[1] Betray. [2] Buy.

And praied him that he him wolde sell
Som poison, that he might his ratouns quell.
And eke ther was a polkat in his hawe,
That, as he sayd, his capons had yslawe:
And fayn he wolde him wreken, if he might,
Of vermine, that destroied hem by night.
The Potecary answerd, Thou shalt have
A thing, as wisly God my soule save,
In all this world ther n'is no creature,
That ete or dronke hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance[1] of a corne of whete,
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lesse while,
Than thou wolt gon a pas not but a mile:
This poison is so strong and violent.
This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poison in a box, and swithe he ran
Into the nexte strete unto a man,
And borwed of him large botelles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke,
For all the night he shope him for to swinke
In carying of the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hath filled with win his grete botelles three,
To his felawes agen repaireth he.
What nedeth it therof to sermon more?
For right as they had cast his deth before,
Right so they han him slain, and that anon.
And whan that this was don, thus spake that on;
Now let us sit and drinke, and make us mery,
And afterward we wiln his body bery.
And with that word it happed him *par cas*,
To take the botelle, ther the poison was,
And dronke, and yave his felaw drinke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.
But certes I suppose that Avicenne
Wrote never in no canon, ne in no fenne,
Mo wonder signes of empoisoning,
Than had thise wretches two or hir ending.
Thus ended ben thise homicides two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.

[1] Amount, quantity.

O cursednesse of alle cursednesse!
O traitours homicide! O wickednesse!
O glotonie, luxurie, and hasardrie!
Thou blasphemour ot Crist with vilanie,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,
That to thy Creatour, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious herte-blood thee bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind, alas!
Now, good men, God foryeve you your trespas,
And ware you fro the sinne of avarice.
Min holy pardon may you all warice,
So that ye offre nobles or starlinges,
Or elles silver broches, spones, ringes.
Boweth your hed under this holy Bulle.
Cometh up, ye wives, and offreth of your wolle;
Your names I entre here in my roll anon;
Into the blisse of heven shul ye gon:
I you assoile by min high powere,
You that wiln offre, as clene and eke as clere
As ye were borne. Lo, sires, thus I preche;
And Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche,
So graunte you his pardon to receive;
For that is best, I wol you not deceive.
But, sires, o word forgate I in my tale;
I have relikes and pardon in my male,
As faire as any man in Englelond,
Which were me yeven by the Popes hond.
If any of you wol of devotion
Offren, and han min absolution,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth here adoun,
And mekely receiveth my pardoun.
Or elles taketh pardon, as ye wende,
Al newe and freshe at every tounes ende,
So that ye offren alway newe and newe,
Nobles or pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is here,
That ye moun have a suffisant pardonere
To assoilen you in contree as ye ride,
For aventures, which that moun betide.
Paraventure ther may falle on, or two,
Doun of his hors, and breke his necke atwo.
Loke, which a seurtee is it to you alle,
That I am in your felawship yfalle,

That may assoile you bothe more and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that our hoste shal beginne,
For he is most envoluped in sinne.
Come forth, sire hoste, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everich on,
Ye for a grote; unbokel anon thy purse.
Nay nay, quod he, than have I Cristes curse.
Let be, quod he, it shal not be, so the ich.[1]
Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde breech,
And swere it were a relike of a seint,
Though it were with thy foundement depeint.
But by the crois, which that Seint Heleine fond,[2]
I wolde I had thin coilons in min hond,
Instede of relikes, or of seintuarie.
Let cut hem of, I wol help thee hem carie;
They shul be shrined in an hogges tord.
This Pardoner answered not a word;
So wroth he was, no word ne wolde he say.
Now, quod our hoste, I wol no lenger play
With thee, ne with non other angry man.
But right anon the worthy knight began,
(Whan that he saw that all the peple lough)
No more of this, for it is right ynough.
Sire Pardoner, be merry and glad of chere;
And ye, sire hoste, that ben to me so dere,
I pray you that ye kisse the Pardoner;
And Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,
And as we diden, let us laugh and play
Anon they kissed, and riden forth hir way.

[1] So may I thrive.

[2] Sir J. Mandeville, c. vii. p. 33, "and nyghe that cuttier is a ple[illegible] 12 degrees of depenesse, where the Holy Crosse was founden, by the wyll of Seynte Eyne, undir a roche, where the Jewe had hidde it. And that was the verray crosse assayed; for they founde 3 crosses: on of oure Lord and 2 of the 2 theves: and Seynte Eyne proved hem on a ded body, that arose fram dethe to lyve, whan that it was leyd on it, that oure Lord dyed on." See Anec. ii. p. 15.—Tyrwhitt.

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

12903—12926.

Our hoste upon his stirrops stode anon,
And saide; Good men, herkeneth everich on,
This was a thrifty tale for the nones.
Sire parish preest, quod he, for Goddes bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore:
I see wel that ye lerned men in lore
Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee.
The Person him answerd, *Benedicite!*
What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere?
Our hoste answerd, O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men, quod our hoste, herkneth to me.
I smell a loller[1] in the wind, quod he.
Abideth for Goddes digne passion,
For we shul han a predication:
This loller here wol prechen us somwhat.
Nay by my fathers soule, that shal he nat,
Sayde the Shipman, here shal he nat preche,
He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche.
We leven all in the gret God, quod he.
He wolde sowen som difficultee,
Or springen cockle[2] in our clene corne.
And therfore, hoste, I warne thee beforne,
My joly body shal a tale telle,
And I shal clinken you so mery a belle,

[1] This is in character, as appears from a treatise of the time. *Harl. Catal.* n. 1666. "Now in Engelond it is a comun protectioun ayens persecutioun—if a man is customable to swere nedeles and fals and unavised, by the bones, nailes, and sides and other membres of Crist.—And to absteyne fro othes nedeles and unleful,—and repreve sinne by way of charite, is mater and cause now, why Prelates and sum Lordes sclaundren men, and clepen hem *Lollardes*, Eretikes," &c.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Springen cockle. This seems to shew that Chaucer considered *Loller*, as derived from *lolium*; but Du Cange, in v. LOLLARDUS, rather supposes that Lollard was a word of German original, signifying *musitator*; a *mumbler* of prayers. See also Kilian, in v. LOLLAERD.—*Tyrwhitt*

That I shal waken all this compagnie:
But it shal not ben of philosophie,
Ne of physike, ne termes queinte of lawe;
Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe.

The Shipmannes Tale.

A MARCHANT whilom dwelled at Seint Denise,
That riche was, for which men held him wise.
A wif he had of excellent beautee,
And compaignable, and revelous was she,
Which is a thing that causeth more dispence,
Than worth is all the chere and reverence,
That men hem don at festes and at dances.
Swiche salutations and contenances
Passen, as doth a shadwe upon the wall:
But wo is him that payen mote for all.
The sely husbond algate he mote pay,
He mote us clothe and he mote us array
All for his owen worship richely:
In which array we dancen jolily.
And if that he may not paraventure,
Or elles lust not swiche dispence endure,
But thinketh it is wasted and ylost,
Than mote another payen for our cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble Marchant held a worthy hous,
For which he had all day so gret repaire
For his largesse, and for his wif was faire,
That wonder is: but herkeneth to my tale.
Amonges all thise gestes gret and smale,
Ther was a Monk, a faire man and a bold,
I trow a thritty winter he was old,
That ever in on was drawing to that place.
This yonge Monk, that was so faire of face,
Acquainted was so with this goode man,
Sithen that hir firste knowlege began,
That in his hous as familier was he,
As it possible is any frend to be.

And for as mochel as this goode man
And eke this Monk, of which that I began,
Were bothe two yborne in o village,
The Monk him claimeth, as for cosinage,
And he again him sayd not ones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foule of day;
For to his herte it was a gret plesance.
Thus ben they knit with eterne alliance,
And eche of hem gan other for to ensure
Of brotherhed, while that hire lif may dure.
Free was Dan[1] John, and namely of dispence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To don plesance, and also gret costage:
He not forgate to yeve the leste page
In all that hous; but, after hir degree,
He yave the lord, and sithen his meinee,
Whan that he came, som maner honest thing;
For which they were as glad of his coming
As foule is fayn, whan that the sonne up riseth.
No more of this as now,[2] for it sufficeth.
But so befell, this Marchant on a day
Shope him to maken redy his array
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,
To byen ther a portion of ware:
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messager. and praied hath Dan John
That he shuld come to Seint Denis, and pleie
With him, and with his wif, a day or tweie,
Or he to Brugges went, in alle wise.
This noble Monk, of which I you devise,
Hath of his Abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To seen hir granges,[3] and hir bernes wide)
And unto Seint Denis he cometh anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John
Our dere cousin, ful of curtesie?
With him he brought a jubbe of Malvesie,[4]
And eke another ful of fine Vernage,
And volatile, as ay was his usage:
And thus I let hem ete, and drinke, and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.

[1] Lord.
[2] At present.
[3] Farmhouses.
[4] See on vs. 9451.

The thridde day this marchant up ariseth,
And on his nedes sadly him aviseth:
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To reken with himselven, wel may be,
Of thilke yere, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good
And it that he encresed were or non.
His bookes and his bagges many on
He layth beforn him on his counting bord.
Ful riche was his tresour and his hord;
For which ful fast his countour dore he shet,
And eke he n'olde no man shuld him let
Of his accountes, for the mene time:
And thus he sit, till it was passed prime.
Dan John was risen in the morwe also,
And in the gardin walketh to and fro,
And hath his thinges sayd ful curteisly.
This goode wif came walking prively
Into the gardin, ther he walketh soft,
And him salueth, as she hath don oft:
A maiden child came in hire compagnie,
Which as hire lust she may governe and gie,
For yet under the yerde[1] was the maide.
O dere cosin min Dan John, she saide,
What aileth you so rathe[2] for to arise?
Nece, quod he, it ought ynough suffise
Five houres for to slepe upon a night:
But it were for an olde appalled wight,
As ben thise wedded men, that lie and dare,[3]
As in a fourme sitteth a wery hare,
Were al forstraught with houndes gret and smale.
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certes, that our goode man
Hath you laboured, sith this night began,
That you were nede to resten hastily.
And with that word he lough ful merily,
And ot his owen thought he wexe all red.
This faire wif gan for to shake hire hed,
And saied thus; Ye, God wote all, quod she.
Nay, cosin min, it stant not so with me.
For by that God, that yave me soule and lif,
In all the reame of Fraunce is ther no wif,

[1] *I.e.*, under control. Compare the Latin, *sub ferulâ*.
[2] Early. [3] Stare.

That lasse lust hath to that sory play;
For I may singe alas and wala wa
That I was borne, but to no wight (quod she)
Dare I not tell how that it stant with me.
Wherfore I thinke out of this lond to wende
Or elles of myself to make an ende.
So ful am I of drede and eke of care.
This monk began upon this wif to stare,
And sayd, Alas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for any sorwe, or any drede,
Fordo[1] yourself: but telleth me your grefe
Paraventure I may in your mischefe
Conseile or helpe: and therfore telleth me
All your annoy, for it shal ben secree.
For on my Portos[2] here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lefe ne loth,[3]
Ne shal I of no conseil you bewray.
The same agen to you, quod she, I say.
By God and by this Portos I you swere,
Though men me wolden all in peces tere,
Ne shal I never, for to gon to helle,
Bewrey o word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no cosinage, ne alliance,
But verayly for love and affiance.
Thus ben they sworne, and hereupon they kiste,
And eche of hem told other what hem liste.
Cosin, quod she, if that I had a space,
As I have non, and namely in this place,
Than wold I tell a legend of my lif,
What I have suffred sith I was a wif
With min husbond, al be he your cosin.
Nay, quod this monk, by God and Seint Martin.
He n'is no more cosin unto me,
Than is the leef that hangeth on the tree:
I clepe him so by Seint Denis of France
To han the more cause of acquaintance
Of you, which I have loved specially
Aboven alle women sikerly,
This swere I you on my professioun:
Telleth your grefe, lest that he come adoun,
And hasteth you, and goth away anon.
My dere love, quod she, o my Dan John,

[1] Undo., ruin. [2] *I.e.*, my Breviary. [3] Will or nill.

Ful lefe were me this conseil for to hide,
But out it mote, I may no lenger abide.
Myn husbond is to me the werste man,
That ever was sith that the world began:
But sith I am a wif, it sit not me
To tellen no wight of our privetee,
Neither in bed, ne in non other place;
God shilde I shulde it tellen for his grace;
A wif ne shal not sayn of hire husbond
But all honour, as I can understond;
Save unto you thus moch I tellen shal:
As helpe me God, he is nought worth at all,
In no degree, the value of a flie.
But yet me greveth most his nigardie:
And wel ye wot, that women naturally
Desiren thinges sixe, as wel as I.
They wolden that hir husbondes shulden be
Hardy, and wise, and riche, and therto free,
And buxome[1] to his wif, and fresh a-bedde.
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
For his honour myselven for to array,
A sonday next I muste nedes pay
An hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.
Yet were me lever that I were unborne,
Than me were don a sclandre or vilanie.
And if min husbond eke might it espie,
I n'ere but lost; and therfore I you prey
Lene me this summe, or elles mote I dey.
Dan John, I say, lene me this hundred frankes;
Parde I wol not faille you my thankes,
If that you list to do that I you pray.
For at a certain day I wol you pay,
And do to you what plesance and service
That I may don, right as you list devise:
And but I do, God take on me vengeance,
As foule as ever had Genelon[2] of France.

[1] Obedient, ready.

One of *Charlemaigne's* officers, who, by his treachery, was the cause of the defeat at *Roncevaux*, the death of *Roland*, &c., for which he was torn to pieces by horses. This at least is the account of the author who calls himself *Archbishop Turpin*, and of the Romancers who followed him; upon whose credit the name of *Genelon*, or *Ganelon*, was for several centuries a synonymous expression for *the worst of traitors*. Our author alludes to his treachery, ver. 14699, 15233, and to his punishment, ver. 12124. See also Du, 1121.—*Tyrwhitt.*

This gentil monk answerd in this manere,
Now trewely, min owen lady dere,
I have (quod he) on you so grete a routhe,
That I you swere, and plighte you my trouthe,
That whan your husbond is to Flandres fare,
I wol deliver you out of this care,
For I wol bringen you an hundred frankes.
And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,
And hire embraced hard, and kiste hire oft.
Goth now your way, quod he, al stille and soft,
And let us dine as sone as that ye may,
For by my kalender it is prime of day:
Goth now, and beth as trewe as I shal be.
Now elles God forbede, sire, quod she;
And forth she goth, as joly as a pie,
And bad the cokes that they shuld hem hie,
So that men mighten dine, and that anon
Up to hire husbond is this wif ygon,
And knocketh at his countour boldely.
Qui est la?[1] quod he. Peter, it am I,
Quod she. What, sire, how longe wol ye fast?
How longe time wol ye reken and cast
Your summes, and your bookes, and your thinges?
The devil have part of all swiche rekeninges.
Ye han ynough parde of Goddes sonde.
Come doun to-day, and let your bagges stonde.
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John
Shal fasting all this day elenge gon?
What? let us here a masse, and go we dine.
Wif, quod this man, litel canst thou divine
The curious besinesse that we have:
For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
Scarsly amonges twenty ten shul thrive
Continuelly, lasting unto oure age.
We moun wel maken chere and good visage,
And driven forth the world as it may be,
And kepen our estat in privitee,
Til we be ded, or elles that we play
A pilgrimage, or gon out of the way.
And therfore have I gret necessitee
Upon this queinte world to avisen me.

[1] Who's there?

For evermore mote we stond in drede
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhede.
To Flandres wol I go to-morwe at day,
And come agein as sone as ever I may:
For which, my dere wif, I thee beseke
As be to every wight buxom and meke,
And for to kepe our good be curious,
And honestly governe wel our hous.
Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty houshold may suffice
Thee lacketh non array, ne no vitaille;
Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not faille.
And with that word his countour dore he shette,
And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And hastily a masse was ther saide,
And spedily the tables were ylaide,
And to the diner faste they hem spedde,
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.
And after diner Dan John sobrely
This chapman toke apart, and privately
He said him thus; Cosin, it stondeth so,
That, wel I see, to Brugges ye wol go,
God and Seint Austin spede you and gide.
I pray you, cosin, wisely that ye ride;
Governeth you also of your diete
Attemprely, and namely[1] in this hete.
Betwix us two nedeth no strange fare;
Farewel, cosin, God shilde you fro care.
If any thing ther be by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me wol command in any wise,
It shal be don, right as ye wol devise.
But o thing or ye go, if it may be,
I wolde prayen you for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a weke or tweye,
For certain bestes that I muste beye,
To storen with a place that is oures:
(God helpe me so, I wold that it were youres)
I shal not faille surely of my day,
Not for a thousand frankes, a mile way.
But let this thing be secree, I you preye;
For yet to-night thise bestes mote I beye.[2]

[1] Especially. [2] Buy.

And fare now wel, min owen cosin dere,
Grand mercy of your cost and of your chere.
This noble marchant gentilly anon
Answerd and said, O cosin min Dan John,
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste:
My gold is youres, whan that it you leste,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare:
Take what you lest, God shilde that ye spare.
But o thing is, ye know it wel ynough
Of chapmen, that hir money is hir plough.
We moun creancen[1] while we han a name,
But goodles for to ben it is no game.
Pay it agen, whan it lith in your ese;
After my might ful fayn wold I you plese.
Thise hundred frankes fet he forth anon,
And prively he toke hem to Dan John:
No wight in al this world wist of this lone,
Saving this marchant, and Dan John alone.
They drinke, and speke, and rome a while and pleye,
Til that Dan John rideth to his abbeye.
The morwe came, and forth this marchant rideth
To Flandres ward, his prentis wel him gideth,
Til he came in to Brugges merily.
Now goth this marchant faste and besily
About his nede, and bieth, and creanceth;
He neither playeth at the dis, ne danceth;
But as a marchant, shortly for to tell,
He ledeth his lif, and ther I let him dwell.
The sonday next the marchant was agon,
To Seint Denis ycomen is Dan John,
With croune and berde all fresh and newe yshave.
In all the hous ther n'as so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he n'as ful fain,
For that my lord Dan John was come again.
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
This faire wif accordeth with Dan John,
That for thise hundred frankes he shuld all night
Haven hire in his armes bolt-upright:
And this accord parformed was in dede.
In mirth all night a besy lif they lede
Til it was day, that Dan John yede his way,
And bad the meinie[2] farewel, have good day.

[1] Borrow money. [2] Servants.

For nan of hem, me no wight in the toun,
Hath of Dan John right non suspectioun;
And forth he rideth home to his abbey,
Or where him list, no more of him I sey.
This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seint Denis he gan for to repaire,
And with his wif he maketh feste and chere,
And telleth him that chaffare is so dere,
That nedes moste he make a chevissance,[1]
For he was bounde in a recognissance,
To paien twenty thousand sheldes[2] anon.
For which this marchant is to Paris gon
To borwe of certain frendes that he hadde
A certain frankes,[3] and somwith him he ladde.
And whan that he was come in to the toun,
For gret chiertee and gret affectioun
Unto Dan John he goth him first to pleye;
Nat for to axe or borwe of him moneye,
But for to weten and seen of his welfare,
And eke to telleu him of his chaffare.
As frendes don, whan they ben mette in fere.[4]
Dan John him maketh feste and mery chere;
And he him tolde agen ful specially,
How he had wel ybought and graciously
(Thanked be God) all hole his marchandise:
Save that he must in alle manere wise
Maken a chevissance, as for his beste:
And than he shulde ben in joye and reste.
Dan John answered, Certes I am fain,[5]
That ye in hele be comen home again:
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand sheldes shuld ye not misse,
For ye so kindely this other day
Lente me gold, and as I can and may
I thanke you, by God and by Seint Jame.
But natheles I toke unto our Dame,
Your wif at home, the same gold again
Upon your benche, she wote it wel certain,
By certain tokenes that I can hire tell.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger dwell;

[1] An agreement for borrowing money.
[2] Crowns, so called from one side of them bearing the device of a shield.
[3] *I.e.*, a certain number of francs.
[4] Together.
[5] Glad.

Our abbot wol out of this toun anon,
And in his compagnie I muste gon.
Grete wel our dame, min owen nece swete,
And farewel, dere cosin, til we mete.
This marchant, which that was ful ware and wise,
Creanced hath, and paid eke in Paris
To certain Lumbardes redy in hir hond
The summe of gold, and gate of hem his bond,
And home he goth, mery as a popingay.
For wel he knew he stood in swiche array,
That nedes muste he winne in that viage
A thousand frankes, above all his costage.
His wif ful redy mette him at the gate,
As she was wont of old usage algate:
And all that night in mirthe they ben sette,
For he was riche, and clerely out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan enbrace
His wif all newe, and kiste hire in hire face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.
No more, quod she, by God ye have ynough:
And wantonly agen with him she plaide,
Til at the last this marchant to hire saide.
By God, quod he, I am a litel wrothe
With you, my wif, although it be me lothe:
And wote ye why? by God, as that I gesse,
That ye han made a manere strangenesse
Betwixen me and my cosin Dan John.
Ye shuld have warned me, or I had gon,
That he you had an hundred frankes paide
By redy token: and held him evil apaide,
For that I to him spake of chevisance:
(Me semed so as by his contenance)
But natheles by God our heven king,
I thoughte not to axe of him no thing.
I pray thee, wif, ne do thou no more so.
Tell me alway, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in min absence
Ypaide thee, lest thurgh thy negligence
I might him axe a thing that he hath paide.
This wif was not aferde ne affraide,
But boldely she saide, and that anon;
Mary I defie that false monk Dan John,
I kepe not of his tokenes never a del:
He toke me certain gold, I wote it wel.

What? evil thedome on his monkes snoute!
For, God it wote, I wend withouten doute,
That he had yeve it me, because of you,
To don therwith min honour and my prow,
For cosinage, and eke for *belle chere*
That he hath had ful often times here.
But sith I see I stonde in swiche disjoint,
I wol answere you shortly to the point.
Ye have mo slakke dettours than am I:
For I wol pay you wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if so be I faille,
I am your wif, score it upon my taile,
And I shal pay as sone as ever I may.
For by my trouth, I have on min array,
And not in waste, bestowed it every del.
And for I have bestowed it so wel
For your honour, for Goddes sake I say,
As beth not wrothe, but let us laugh and play.
Ye shal my joly body han to wedde:
By God I n'ill not pay you but a-bedde
Forveve it me, min owen spouse dere;
Turne hitherward and maketh better chere.
This marchant saw ther was no remedy:
And for to chide, it n'ere but a foly,
Sith that the thing may not amended be.
Now, wif, he said, and I forveve it thee;
But by thy lif ne be no more so large;[1]
Kepe bet my good, this yeve I thee in charge.
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Taling ynough, unto our lives ende.

[1] Free.

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGUE.

13365–13389.

WEL said by *corpus Domini*, quod our hoste,
Now longe mote thou sailen by the coste,
Thou gentil maister, gentil marinere.
God give the monke a thousand last quad yere.[1]
A ha, felawes, beth ware of swiche a jape.
The monke put in the mannes hode an ape,[2]
And in his wiles eke, by Seint Austin.
Draweth no monkes more into your in.
But now passe over, and let us seke aboute,
Who shal now tellen first of all this route
Another tale: and with that word he said,
As curteisly as it had ben a maid,
My lady Prioresse, by your leve,
So that I wist I shuld you not agreve,
I wolde demen, that ye tellen shold
A tale next, if so were that ye wold.
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady dere?
Gladly, quod she, and saide as ye shul here.

The Prioresses Tale.

O LORD our lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad! (quod she)
For not al only thy laude precious
Parfourmed is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourmed is, for on the brest souking
Somtime shewen they thin herying.[3]

[1] *I.e.*, God give the monk a thousand last (*i.e.*, burdens, weights,) of bad years—*i.e.*, ever so much misfortune.
[2] *I.e.*, made a fool of him. [3] Praise.

Wherfore in laude, as I can best and may,
Of thee and of the white lily flour,
Which that thee bare, and is a maide alway,
To tell a storie I wol do my labour;
Not that I may encresen hire honour,
For she hireselven is honour and rote
Of bountee, next hire sone, and soules bote.[1]

O mother maide, o maide and mother fre,
O bushe unbrent, breuning in Moyses sight,
That ravishedest doun fro the deitee,
Thurgh thin humblesse, the gost that in thee alight·
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light,
Conceived was the fathers sapience:
Helpe me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertue and thy gret humilitee,
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science:
For somtime, lady, or men pray to thee,
Thou gost beforn[2] of thy benignitee,
And getest us the light, of thy prayere,
To giden us unto thy sone so dere.

My conning is so weke, o blisful quene,
For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I ne may the weighte not sustene;
But as a child of twelf moneth old or lesse,
That can unnethes[3] any word expresse,
Right so fare I, and therfore I you pray,
Gideth my song, that I shal of you say.

THER was in Asie, in a gret citee,
Amonges Cristen folk a Jewerie,[4]
Sustened by a lord of that contree,
For foule usure, and lucre of vilanie,
Hateful to Crist, and to his compagnie:
And thurgh the strete men mighten ride and weude,
For it was free, and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were
Children an hepe comen of Cristen blood,
That lerned in that scole yere by yere,
Swiche manere doctrine as men used there:

[1] Profit [2] Goest before [3] With difficulty.
[4] Like our "Jewry," a district inhabited by Jews.

This is to say, to singen and to rede,
As smale children don in hir childhede.

Among thise children was a widewes sone,
A litel clergion,[1] sevene yere of age,
That day by day to scole was his wone,
And eke also, wheras he sey the image
Of Cristes moder, had he in usage,
As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say
Ave Marie, as he goth by the way.

Thus hath this widewe hire litel sone ytaught
Our blisful Lady, Cristes moder dere,
To worship ay, and he forgate it naught:
For sely[2] childe wol alway sone lere.
But ay, whan I remembre on this matere,
Seint Nicholas stant ever in my presence,
For he so yong to Crist did reverence.[3]

This litel childe his litel book lerning,
As he sate in the scole at his primere,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde sing,
As children lered hir antiphonere:[4]
And as he dorst, he drow him nere and nere,
And herkened ay the wordes and the note,
Til he the firste vers coude[5] al by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
For he so yonge and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expounden him this song in his laugage,
Or telle him why this song was in usage:
This prayde he him to construe and declare,
Ful often time upon his knees bare.

His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Answerd him thus: This song, I have herd say,
Was maked of our blisful Lady fre,
Hire to salue, and eke hire for to prey
To ben our help, and socour whan we dey.
I can no more expound in this matere:
I lerne song, I can but smal grammere.

[1] A young clerk. [2] Simple.
[3] So precious was the piety of this Saint, that, as an infant, he only sucked the breast *once* on Wednesdays and Fridays.
[4] *I.e.* the responses of the choral service. [5] Knew.

And is this song maked in reverence
Of Cristes moder? said this innocent;
Now certes I wol don my diligence
To conne it all, or Cristemasse be went,
Though that I for my primer shal be shent,
And shal be beten thries in an houre,
I wol it conne, our Ladie for to honoure.

His felaw taught him homeward prively
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And than he song it wel and boldely
Fro word to word according with the note:
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
To scoleward and homeward whan he wente
On Cristes moder set was his entente.

As I have said, thurghout the Jewerie
This litel child as he came to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he sing and crie,
O Alma redemptoris, ever mo:
The swetenesse hath his herte persed so
Of Cristes moder, that to hire to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

Our firste fo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,
Up swale and said, O Ebraike[2] peple, alas:
Is this to you a thing that is honest,
That swiche a boy shal walken as him leste
In your despit, and sing of swiche sentence,
Which is again our lawes reverence?

From thennesforth the Jewes han conspired
This innocent out of this world to chace:
An homicide therto han they hired,
That in an aleye had a privee place,
And as the child gan forthby for to pace,
This cursed Jew him hent, and held him fast
And cut his throte, and in a pit him cast.

I say that in a wardrope they him threwe,
Wher as thise Jewes purgen hir entraille.
O cursed folk, of Herodes alle newe,
What may your evil entente you availle?
Mordre wol out, certein it wol not faille.

[1] Punished. [2] Hebrew.

And namely ther the honour of God shal sprede:
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.

O martyr souded in[1] virginitee,
Now maist thou singe, and folwen ever in on
The white lamb celestial, quod she,
Of which the gret Evangelist Seint John
In Pathmos wrote, which sayth that they that goon
Beforn this lamb, and singe a song al newe,
That never fleshly woman they ne knewe.

This poure widewe awaiteth al that night
After hire litel childe, and he came nought:
For which as sone as it was dayes light,
With face pale of drede and besy thought,
She hath at scole and elleswher him sought,
Til finally she gan so fer aspie,
That he last seen was in the Jewerie.

With modres pitee in hire brest enclosed
She goth, as she were half out of hire minde,
To every place, wher she hath supposed
By likelihed hire litel child to finde:
And ever on Cristes moder meke and kinde
She cried, and at the laste thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewes she him sought.

She freyneth[2] and she praieth pitously
To every Jew that dwelled in thilke place,
To telle hire, if hire child went ought forthby
They sayden, Nay; but Jesu of his grace
Yave in hire thought, within a litel space,
That in that place after hire sone she cride,
Ther he was casten in a pit beside.

O grete God, that parformest thy laude
By mouth of innocentes, lo here thy might!
This gemme of chastitee, this emeraude,
And eke of martirdome the rubie bright,
Ther he with throte ycorven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to singe
So loude, that all the place gan to ringe.

[1] *I.e.*, consolidated, closely attached to
[2] Asketh, inquireth.

The Cristen folk that thurgh the strete wente,
In comen, for to wondre upon this thing:
And hastifly they for the provost sente.
He came anon withouten tarying,
And herieth[1] Crist, that is of heven king,
And eke his moder, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewes let he binde.

This child with pitous lamentation
Was taken up, singing his song alway:
And with honour and gret procession,
They carien him unto the next abbey.
His moder swouning by the bere lay;
Unnethes might the peple that was there
This newe Rachel bringen fro his bere.

With turment, and with shameful deth eche on
This provost doth thise Jewes for to sterve,
That of this morder wiste, and that anon;
He n'olde no swiche cursednesse observe:
Evil shal he have, that evil wol deserve.
Therfore with wilde hors he did hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his bere ay lith this innocent
Beforn the auter while the masse last:
And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han spedde hem for to berie him ful fast:
And whan they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this child, whan spreint was the holy water,
And sang, *o Alma redemptoris mater.*

This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes ben, or elles ought to be,
This yonge child to conjure he began,
And said; O dere child, I halse[2] thee
In vertue of the holy Trinitee,

[1] Praiseth.

[2] MSS. Ask. I. 2. read "I conjure thee"—but that seems to be a gloss. *To halse* signifies properly *to embrace round the neck*, from the Sax. *hals*, the neck. See ver. 10253. So in CL. ver. 1290: I stand and speke and laugh and kisse and *halse*. It signifies also *to salute*, P. P. fol. xxii.: I *halse* hym hendlich, as I hys frende were; and fol. xxxix. *to salute with reverence*: And the eleven sterres *halsed* him all—which seems to be the sense here.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,
Sith that thy throte is cut to my seming.

My throte is cut unto my nekke-bon,
Saide this child, and as by way of kinde
I shuld have deyd, ye longe time agon:
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes finde,
Wol that his glory last and be in minde,
And for the worship of his moder dere,
Yet may I sing *o Alma* loude and clere.

This welle of mercie, Cristes moder swete,
I loved alway, as after my conning:
And whan that I my lif shulde forlete,
To me she came, and bad me for to sing
This antem verraily in my dying,
As ye han herde, and, whan that I had songe,
Me thought she laid a grain upon my tonge.

Wherfore I sing, and sing I mote certain
In honour of that blisful maiden free,
Til fro my tonge of taken is the grain.
And after that thus saide she to me;
My litel child, than wol I fetchen thee,
Whan that the grain is fro thy tong ytake:
Be not agaste, I wol thee not forsake.

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tonge out caught, and toke away the grain;
And he yave up the gost ful softely.
And whan this abbot had this wonder sein,
His salte teres trilled adoun as reyne.
And groff[1] he fell al platte upon the ground,
And still he lay, as he had ben ybound.

The covent lay eke upon the pavement
Weping and herying[2] Cristes moder dere.
And after that they risen, and forth ben went,
And toke away this martir fro his bere,
And in a tombe of marble stones clere
Enclosen they his litel body swete:
Ther[3] he is now, God lene[4] us for to mete.

[1] Flat on the ground.
[2] Praising.
[3] Where.
[4] Grant.

O yonge Hew[1] of Lincoln, slain also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it n'is but a litel while ago,
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercie multiplie,
For reverence of his moder Marie.

[1] Hugh. See the Introduction.

PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

13621–13647.

WHAN said was this miracle, every man
As sober was, that wonder was to see,
Til that our hoste to japen he began,
And than at erst he loked upon me,[1]
And saide thus; What man art thou? quod he.
Thou lokest, as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.

Approche nere, and loke up merily.
Now ware you, sires, and let this man have place.
He in the waste is shapen as wel as I:
This were a popet in an arme to enbrace
For any woman, smal and faire of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenance,
For unto no wight doth he daliance.

Say now somwhat, sin other folk han saide;
Tell us a tale of mirthe and that anon.
Hoste, quod I, ne be not evil apaide,
For other tale certes can I non,
But of a rime I lerned yore agon.
Ye, that is good, quod he, we shullen here
Som deintee thing, me thinketh by thy chere.

The Rime of Sire Thopas.

LISTENETH, lordinges, in good entent,
And I wol tell you *verament*
Of mirthe and of solas,
Al of a knight was faire and gent
In bataille and in turnament,
His name was sire Thopas.

[1] *I. e.*, Chaucer himself.

Yborne he was in fer contree,
In Flandres, al beyonde the see,
At Popering[1] in the place,
His father was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas was a doughty swain,
White was his face as paindemaine[2]
His lippes red as rose.
His rudde[3] is like scarlet in grain,
And I you tell in good certain
He had a semely nose.

His here, his berde, was like safroun,
That to his girdle raught[4] adoun,
His shoon of cordewane;
Of Brugges were his hosen broun;
His robe was of ciclatoun,[5]
That coste many a jane.[6]

He coude hunt at the wilde dere,
And ride on hauking for the rivere[7]
With grey goshauk on honde:

[1] Poppering or Poppeling was the name of a parish the Marches of Calais.

[2] Some very white bread, probably taking its name from the province of Maine.

[3] Complexion.

[4] Reached fell.

[5] The glossaries suppose this word to be compounded of *cheke* and *latoun*, a species of base metal like gold: but it seems rather to be merely a corruption of the Fr. *Ciclaton;* which originally signified *a circular robe of state*, from the Gr. Lat. *Cyclas;* and afterwards *the cloth of gold*, of which such robes were generally made. Du Cange in v. Cyclas has produced instances enough of both senses. In fact several MSS. read *Cicluton;* and I have no excuse for not having followed them, but that I was misled by the authority of Spenser, as quoted by Mr. Warton, Obs. on Sp. v. i. p. 194. Upon further consideration, I think it is plain, that Spenser was mistaken in the very foundation of his notion, "that the quilted Irish jacket embroidered with gilded leather" had any resemblance to "the robe of Shecklaton." He supposes, that Chaucer is here describing Sir Thopas, *as he went to fight against the Giant*, in his robe of Shecklaton; whereas, on the contrary, it is evident that Sir Thopas is here described *in his usual habit in time of peace.* His warlike apparel, when he goes to fight against the Giant, is described below, ver. 13786 and foll. and is totally different.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[6] *I. e.*, a coin of Genoa.

[7] Hawking at waterfowl.

Therto he was a good archere,
Of wrastling was ther non his pere,
Ther ony ram[1] shuld stonde.

Ful many a maide bright in bour
They mourned for him *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet to slepe;
But he was chaste and no lechour,
And swete as is the bramble flour,
That bereth the red hepe.[2]

And so it fell upon a day,
Forsoth, as I you tellen may,
Sire Thopas wold out ride;
He worth upon his stede gray,
And in his hond a launcegay,[3]
A long swerd by his side.

He priketh[4] thurgh a faire forest,
Therin is many a wilde best,
Ye bothe buck and hare,
And as he priked North and Est,
I telle it you, him had almeste
Betidde a sory care.

Ther springen herbes grete and smale,
The licoris and the setewale,[5]
And many a cloue gilotre,[6]
And notemuge to put in ale,
Whether it be moist or stale,
Or for to lain in cofre.

The briddes singen, it is no nay,
The sperhauk and the popingay,
That joye it was to here,
The throstel cok made eke his lay,
The wode dove upon the spray
He sang ful loude and clere.

Sire Thopas fell in love-longing
Al whan he herd the throstel sing,
And priked as he were wood;[7]

[1] The usual prize at wrestling. [2] The fruit of the dog rose.
[3] A kind of pike or spear.—See *Tyrwhitt*. [4] Rideth.
[5] Valerian. [6] Either a clove-tree, or its fruit. [7] Mad.

His faire stede in his priking
So swatte, that men might him wring,
  His sides were al blood.

Sire Thopas eke so wery was
For priking on the softe gras,
  So fiers was his corage,
That doun he laid him in that place
To maken his stede som solace,
  And yaf him good forage.

A, Seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
What aileth this love at me
  To binde me so sore?
Me dremed all this night parde,
An elf-quene shal my lemman be,
  And slepe under my gore.[1]

An elf-quene wol I love ywis,
For in this world no woman is
  Worthy to be my make[2] || in toun,—
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-quene I me take
  By dale and eke by doun.

Into his sadel he clombe anon,
And priked over stile and ston
  An elf-quene for to espie,
Til he so long had ridden and gone,
That he fond in a privee wone
  The contree of Faerie.

Wherin he soughte North and South,
And oft he spied with his mouth
  In many a forest wilde,
For in that contree n'as ther non,
That to him dorst ride or gon,
  Neither wif ne childe.

[1] See note on vs. 3237.
[2] Mate. The mark ‖ is placed by Tyrwhitt, on the authority of MSS. There is probably something wanting in each instance where it occurs.

Sire Thopas and ye gret Geaunt Oliphaunt. P. 5?2

Til that ther came a gret geaunt,
His name was Sire Oliphaunt,[1]
A perilous man of dede,
He sayde, Child, by Termagaunt,[2]
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
Anon I slee thy stede || with mace—
Here is the Quene of Faerie,
With harpe, and pipe, and simphonie
Dwelling in this place.

The child sayd, Al so mote I the,
To morwe wol I meten thee,
Whan I have min armoure,
And yet I hope *par ma fay*,
That thou shalt with this launcegay
Abien it ful soure; || thy mawe—
Shal I perce, if I may,
Or it be fully prime of the day,
For here thou shalt be slawe.

Sire Thopas drow abak ful fast;
This geaunt at him stones cast
Out of a fel staffe sling:
But faire escaped child Thopas,
And all it was thurgh Goddes grace,
And thurgh his faire bering.

Yet listeneth, lordings, to my tale,
Merier than the nightingale,
For now I wol you roune,
How Sire Thopas with sides smale,
Priking over hill and dale,
Is comen agein to toune.

His mery men commandeth he,
To maken him bothe game and gle,
For nedes must he fighte,
With a geaunt with hedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
Of on that shone ful brighte

Do come, he sayd, my minestrales
And gestours[3] for to tellen tales
Anon in min arming,

[1] Elephant, a proper name for a giant.
[2] A Saracen deity.
[3] See *Tyrwhitt*.

Of romaunces that ben reales,[1]
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eke of love-longing.

They fet him first the swete win,
And mede eke in a maselin,[2]
And real spicerie,
Of ginger-bred that was ful fin,
And licoris and eke comin,[3]
With suger that is trie.[4]

He didde[5] next his white lere[6]
Of cloth of lake[7] fin and clere
A breche and eke a sherte,
And next his shert an haketon,[8]
And over that an habergeon,
For percing of his herte,

And over that a fin hauberk,
Was all ywrought of Jewes werk,
Ful strong it was of plate,
And over that his cote-armoure,
As white as is the lily floure,
In which he wold debate.[9]

His sheld was all of gold so red,
And therin was a bores hed,
A charboucle[10] beside;
And ther he swore on ale and bred
How that the geaunt shuld be ded,
Betide what so betide.

His jambeux[11] were of cuirbouly,[12]
His swerdes sheth of ivory,
His helme of latoun bright,
His sadel was of rewel bone,[13]
His bridel as the sonne shone,
Or as the mone light.

[1] Royal.
[2] A mayerin, a drinking-cup.
[3] Cummin seed.
[4] Tried, refined.
[5] Put on.
[6] Complexion.
[7] It is uncertain what kind of cloth is meant.
[8] A short, sleeveless cassock.
[9] Fight.
[10] Carbuncle.
[11] Boots.
[12] Cuir bouilli, *i.e.*, hide, leather, soaked in hot water.
[13] See Appendix.

His spere was of fin cypres,
That bodeth werre, and nothing pees,
The hed ful sharpe yground.
His stede was all dapple gray,
It goth an aumble in the way
Ful softely and round || in londe—
Lo, Lordes min, here is a fit;
If ye wol ony more of it,
To telle it wol I fond.

Now hold your mouth *pour charite*,
Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my spell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies love and druerie,[1]
Anon I wol you tell.

Men speken of romaunces of pris,
Of Hornchild, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sire Guy,
Of Sire Libeux, and Pleindamour,
But Sire Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of real chevalrie.

His goode stede he al bestrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,[2]
As sparcle out of bronde;[3]
Upon his crest he bare a tour,
And therin stiked a lily flour,
God shilde his corps fro shonde.[4]

And for he was a knight auntrous,[5]
He n'olde slepen in non hous,
But liggen in his hood,
His brighte helm was his wanger,[6]
And by him baited his destrer[7]
Of herbes[8] fin and good.

Himself drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sire Percivell
So worthy under wede,
Til on a day ———

[1] Gallantry. [2] Glided. [3] Brand.
[4] Destruction. [5] Adventurous. [6] Pillow
[7] Warhorse, *destrarius*. [8] Baited of, *i.e.*, fed on.

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

1384?–1388.

No more of this for Goddes dignitee,
Quod oure hoste, for thou makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse,
That al so wisly God my soule blesse,
Min eres aken of thy drafty[1] speche.
Now swiche a rime the devil I beteche;
This may wel be rime dogerel, quod he.
Why so? quod I, why wolt thou letten[2] me
More of my tale, than an other man,
Sin that it is the beste rime I can?
By God, quod he, for plainly at o word,
Thy drafty riming is not worth a tord:
Thou dost nought elles but dispendest time.
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger rime.
Let see wher thou canst tellen ought in geste.
Or tellen in prose somwhat at the leste,
In which ther be som mirthe or som doctrine.
Gladly, quod I, by Goddes swete pine
I wol you tell a litel thing in prose,
That oughte liken you, as I suppose,
Or elles certes ye be to dangerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told somtime in sondry wise
Of sondry folk, as I shal you devise.
As thus, ye wote that every Evangelist
That telleth us the peine of Jesu Crist,
Ne saith not alle thing as his felaw doth:
But natheles hir sentence is al soth,
And alle accorden as in hir sentence,
Al be ther in hir telling difference:
For som of hem say more, and som say lesse,
Whan they his pitous passion expresse;
I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luke and John,
But douteles hir sentence is all on.

[1] Trumpery. [2] Hinder.

Therfore, lordinges all, I you beseche,
If that ye thinke I vary in my speche,
As thus, though that I telle som del more
Of proverbes, than ye han herde before
Comprehended in this litel tretise here,
To enforcen with the effect of my matere,
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye han herde, yet to you aile I pray
Blameth me not, for, as in my sentence,
Shul ye nowher finden no difference
Fro the sentence of thilke tretise lite,
After the which this mery tale I write.
And therfore herkeneth what I shal say,
And let me tellen all my tale I pray.

The Tale of Melibeus.

A YONGE man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, begate upon his wif, that called was Prudence, a doughter which that called was Sophie.[1]

Upon a day befell, that he for his disport is went into the feldes him to playe. His wif and eke his doughter hath he laft within his hous, of which the dores weren fast yshette. Foure of his olde foos han it espied, and setten ladders to the walles of his hous, and by the windowes ben entred, and beten his wif, and wounded his doughter with five mortal woundes, in five sondry places; this is to say, in hire feet, in hire hondes, in hire eres, in hire nose, and in hire mouth; and lefte hire for dede, and wenten away.

Whan Melibeus retorned was into his hous, and sey al this meschief, he, like a mad man, rending his clothes gan to wepe and crie.

Prudence his wif, as fer forth as she dorste, besought him of his weping for to stint: but not forthy[2] he gan to crie and wepen ever lenger the more.

This noble wif Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of

[1] *I. e.*, wisdom. The reader will doubtless observe (as Thomas and Tyrwhitt have noticed) that the earlier pages of this tale appear to be written in a species of blank verse.

[2] Therefore.

love, wheras he saith; he is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe, in the deth of hire childe, til she have wept hire fille, as for a certain time: and than shal a man don his diligence with amiable wordes hire to reconforte and preye hire of hire weping for to stinte. For which reson this noble wif Prudence suffred hire housbond for to wepe and crie, as for a certain space; and whan she saw hire time, she sayde to him in this wise. Alas! my lord, quod she, why make ye yourself for to be like a fool? Forsothe it apperteineth not to a wise man, to maken swiche a sorwe. Youre doughter, with the grace of God, shal warish[1] and escape. And al were it so that she right now were dede, ye ne ought not as for hire deth youreself to destroye. Senek saith; the wise man shal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he shulde suffren it in patience, as wel as he abideth the deth of his owen propre persone.

This Melibeus answered anon and said: what man (quod he) shulde of his weping stinte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jesu Crist, our Lord, himself wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend. Prudence answered; certes wel I wote, attempre[2] weping is nothing defended,[3] to him that sorweful is, among folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The Apostle Poule unto the Romaines writeth; man shal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepen with swiche folk as wepen. But though attempre weping be ygranted, outrageous weping certes is defended. Mesure of weping shulde be considered, after the lore that techeth us Senek. Whan that thy frend is dede (quod he) let not thin eyen to moiste ben of teres, ne to muche drie: although the teres comen to thin eyen, let hem not falle. And whan thou hast forgon thy frend, do diligence to get agein another frend: and this is more wisdom than for to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lorne, for therin is no bote.[4] And therfore if ye governe you by sapience, put away sorwe out of youre herte. Remembreth you that Jesus Sirak sayth; a man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florishing in his age: but sothly a sorweful herte maketh his bones drie. He saith eke thus, that sorwe in herte sleeth ful many a man. Salomon sayth, that right as mouthes[5] in the shepes fleese anoien[6] to the clothes, and the smale

[1] Be healed. [2] Moderate. [3] Forbidden.
[4] Profit. [5] Moths. [6] Are injurious.

wormes to the tree, right so anoieth sorwe to the herte of man. Wherfore us ought as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the losse of oure goodes temporel, have patience.

Remembre you upon the patient Job, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporel substaunce, and in his body endured and received ful many a grevous tribulation, yet sayde he thus: Oure Lord hath yeve it to me, oure Lord hath benft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right so is it don; yblessed be the name of oure Lord. To thise foresaide thinges answered Melibeus unto his wif Prudence: all thy wordes (quod he) ben trewe, and therto profitable, but trewely min herte is troubled with this sorwe so grevously, that I n'ot what to don. Let calle (quod Prudence) thyn trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, which that ben wise, and telleth to hem your cas, and herkeneth what they saye in conseilling, and governe you after hir sentence. Salomon saith; werke all thinges by conseil, and thou shalt never repente.

Than, by conseil of his wif Prudence, this Melibeus let callen a gret congregation of folk, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and som of his olde enemies reconciled (as by hir semblant) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther comen some of his neigheboures, that diden him reverence more for drede than for love, as it happeth oft. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise Advocats lerned in the lawe.

And whan thise folk togeder assembled weren, this Melibeus in sorweful wise shewed hem his cas, and by the manere of his speche, it semed that in herte he bare a cruel ire, redy to don vengeaunce upon his foos, and sodeinly desired that the werre shulde beginne, but natheles yet axed he his conseil upon this matere. A surgien, by licence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up rose, and unto Melibeus sayde, as ye moun here.

Sire, (quod he) as to us surgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher as we ben withholden,[1] and to our patient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many time and ofte, that whan twey men han everich wounded other, o same surgien heleth hem both, wherfore unto our art it is not pertinent to norice werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to

[1] Retained.

the warishing[1] of youre doughter, al be it so that perilously she be wounded, we shuln do so ententif besinesse fro day to night, that with the grace of God, she shal be hole and sound, as sone as is possible. Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that they saiden a fewe wordes more: that right as maladies ben cured by hir contraries, right so shal man warishe werre. His neigheboures ful of envie, his feined frendes that semed reconciled, and his flaterers, maden semblant of weping, and empeired and agregged muchel of this matere, in preysing gretly Melibee of might, of power, of richesse, and of frendes, despising the power of his adversaries: and saiden outrely,[2] that he anon shulde wreken him on his foos, and beginnen werre.

Up rose than an Advocat that was wise, by leve and by conseil of other that were wise, and sayde: Lordinges, the nede for the which we ben assembled in this place, is a ful hevie thing, and an heigh matere, because of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be don, and eke by reson of the grete damages, that in time coming ben possible to fallen for the same cause, and eke by reson of the gret richesse and power of the parties bothe, for the which resons, it were a ful gret peril to erren in this matere. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence; we conseille you, aboven alle thing, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keping of thy propre persone, in swiche a wise that thou ne want non espie ne watche, thy body for to save. And after that, we conseille that in thin hous thou sette suffisant garnison, so that they moun as wel thy body as thy hous defende. But certes for to meeven werre, ne sodenly for to do vengeaunce, we moun not deme in so litel time that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leiser and space to have deliberation in this cas to deme;[3] for the comune proverbe saith thus; He that sone demeth, sone shal repente. And eke men sain, that thilke juge is wise, that sone understondeth a matere, and jugeth by leiser. For al be it so, that al tarying be anoiful, algates it is not to repreve in yeving of jugement, ne in vengeance taking, whan it is suffisant and resonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the woman that was taken in advoutrie, was brought in his presence to knowen what shuld be don with hire

[1] Restoration, cure. [2] Openly. [3] Determine.

persone, al be it that he wist wel himself what that he wolde answere, yet ne wolde he not answere sodeinly, but he wolde have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twies; and by thise causes we axen deliberation: and we shuln than by the grace of God conseille the thing that shal be profitable.

Up sterte than the yonge folk at ones, and the most partie of that compagnie han scorned this olde wise man, and begonnen to make noise and saiden; Right so as while that iren is hot men shulde smite, right so men shuln do wreken hir wronges, while that they ben freshe and newe: and with loude voys they criden werre, werre. Up rose tho on of thise olde wise, and with his hand made countenaunce that men shuld holde hem stille, and yeve him audience. Lordinges, (quod he) ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wote ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his beginning hath so gret an entring and so large, that every wight may enter whan him liketh, and lightly find werre: but certes what end that shal befalle, it is not light to know. For sothly whan that werre is ones begonne, ther is ful many a child unborne of his moder, that shal sterve[1] yong, by cause of thilke werre, other elles live in sorwe, and dien in wretchednesse: and therfore or that any werre be begonne, men must have gret conseil and gret deliberation. And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by resons, wel nie alle at ones begonne they to rise, for to breken his tale, and bidden him ful oft his wordes for to abregge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that listen not heren his wordes, his sermon hem anoieth. For Jesus Sirak sayth, that musike in weping is a noious thing. This is to sayn, as muche availleth to speke beforn folk to which his speche anoieth, as to singe beforne him that wepeth. And whan this wise man saw that him wanted audience, al shamefast he sette him doun agein. For Salomon saith: ther as thou ne mayst have non audience, enforce thee not to speke. I see wel, (quod this wise man) that the comune proverbe is soth, that good conseil wanteth,[2] whan it is most nede.

Yet had this Melibeus in his conseil many folk, that prively in his ere conseilled him certain thing, and conseilled him the contrary in general audience. Whan Melibeus had herd that the gretest partie of his conseil

[1] Die. [2] Is wanting.

lordship and maistrie of his person, men n'olde not be conseilled so often: for sothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois whether he wol werke after that conseil or non. And as to your fourth reson, ther as ye sain that the janglerie of women can hide thinges that they wot not; as who so sayth, that a woman can not hide that she wote; Sire, thise wordes ben understonde of women that ben jangleresses and wicked; of which women men sain that three thinges driven a man out of his hous, that is to say, smoke, dropping of raine, and wicked wives. And of swiche women Salomon sayth, That a man were better dwell in desert, than with a woman that is riotous. And, sire, by your leve, that am not I; for ye have ful often assaied my gret silence and my gret patience, and eke how wel that I can hide and hele thinges, that men oughten secretly to hiden. And sothly as to your fifthe reson, wheras ye say, that in wicked conseil women venquishen men; God wote that thilke reson stant here in no stede: for understondeth now, ye axen conseil for to do wickednesse; and if ye wol werken wickednesse, and your wif restraineth thilke wicked purpos, and overcometh you by reson and by good conseil, certes your wif ought rather to be preised than to be blamed. Thus shulde ye understonde the philosophre that sayth, In wicked conseil women venquishen hir husbondes. And ther as ye blamen all women and hir resons, I shal shewe you by many ensamples, that many women have ben ful good, and yet ben, and hir conseil holesome and profitable. Eke som men han sayd, that the conseil of women is either to dere, or elles to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a woman be bad, and hire conseil vile and nought worth, yet han men founden ful many a good woman, and discrete and wise in conseilling. Lo, Jacob, thurgh the good conseil of his mother Rebecke, wan the benison of his father, and the lordship over all his brethren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelt, out of the honde of Holofern, that had it beseged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigail delivered Nabal hire housbond fro David the king, that wolde han slain him, and appesed the ire of the king by hire wit, and by hire good conseilling. Hester by hire conseil enhaunced gretly the peple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the king. And the same bountee in good conseilling of many a good woman moun men rede and tell. And further more, whan that

oure Lord had created Adam oure forme father, he sayd in this wise; it is not good to be a man allone: make we to him an helpe semblable to himself. Here moun ye see that if women weren not good, and hir conseil good and profitable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither han wrought hem, ne called hem helpe of man, but rather confusion of man. And ther sayd a clerk ones in two vers; what is better than gold? Jaspre. What is better than jaspre? Wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? Woman. And what is better than a good woman? Nothing. And, Sire, by many other resons moun ye seen, that many women ben good, and hir conseil good and profitable. And therfore, Sire, if ye wol troste to my conseil, I shal restore you your doughter hole and sound: and I wol don to you so muche, that ye shuln have honour in this cas.

Whan Melibee had herd the wordes of his wif Prudence, he sayd thus: I se wel that the word of Salomon is soth; for he saith, that wordes, that ben spoken discretly by ordinaunce, ben honiecombes, for they yeven swetenesse to the soule, and holsomnesse to the body. And, wif, because of thy swete wordes, and eke for I have preved and assaied thy grete sapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conseil in alle thing.

Now, Sire, (quod dame Prudence) and sein that ye vouchsafe to be governed by my conseil, I wol enforme you how that ye shuln governe yourself, in chesing of youre conseillours. Ye shuln first in alle your werkes mekely besechen to the heigh God, that he wol be your conseillour: and shapeth you to swiche entente that he yeve you conseil and comforte, as taught Tobie his sone; at alle times thou shalt blesse God, and preie him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thy conseils ben in him for evermore. Seint James eke sayth; if any of you have nede of sapience, axe it of God. And afterwarde, than shullen ye take conseil in yourself, and examine wel your owen thoughtes, of swiche thinges as you thinketh that ben best for your profit. And than shuln ye drive fro your herte three thinges that ben contrarious to good conseil; that is to sayn, ire, coveitise, and hastinesse.

First, he that axeth conseil of himself, certes he must be withouten ire, for many causes. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in himself, he weneth alway that he may do thing that he may not do. And secondly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that

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may not wel deme, may not wel conseille. The thridde is this; he that is irous and wroth, as sayth Senek, ne may not speke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stirreth other folk to anger and to ire. And eke, Sire, ye must drive coveitise out of your herte. For the Apostle sayth, that coveitise is the rote of alle harmes. And trosteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but only to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that ne may never ben accomplised; for ever the more haboundance that he hath of richesse, the more he desireth. And, Sire, ye must also drive out of youre herte hastinesse: for certes ye ne moun not deme for the beste a soden thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye must avise you on it ful ofte: for as we have herde herebefom, the commune proverbe is this; he that sone demeth, sone repenteth.

Sire, ye ne be not alway in like disposition, for certes som thing that somtime semeth to you that it is good for to do, another time it semeth to you the contrarie.

And whan ye han taken conseil in yourself, and han demed by good deliberation swiche thing as you semeth beste, than rede I you that ye kepe it secree. Bewreye not your conseil to no persone, but if so be that ye wenen sikerly, that thurgh youre bewreying youre condition shal ben to you more profitable. For Jesus Sirak saith: neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discover not thy secree, ne thy folie: for they woln yeve you audience and loking, and supportation in youre presence, and scorne you in youre absence. Another clerk sayth, that scarsly shalt thou finden any persone that may kepe thy conseil secrely. The book sayth; while that thou kepest thy conseil in thin herte, thou kepest it in thy prison: and whan thou bewreyest thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And therfore you is better to hide your conseil in your herte, than to preye him to whom ye han bewreyed youre conseil, that he wol kepe it close and stille. For Seneca sayth: if so be that thou ne mayst not thin owen conseil hide, how darest thou preyen any other wight thy conseil secrely to kepe? but natheles, if thou wene sikerly[1] that thy bewreying of thy conseil to a persone wol make thy condition to stonden in the better plight, than shalt thou telle him thy conseil in this wise. First, thou shalt

[1] Truly.

make no semblant whether thee were lever pees or werre, or this or that; ne shewe him not thy will ne thin entente: for troste wel that communly these conseillours ben flaterers, namely the conseillours of grete lordes, for they enforcen hem alway rather to speken plesant wordes enclining to the lordes lust, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable: and therfore men sayn, that the riche man hath selde good conseil, but if he have it of himself. And after that thou shalt consider thy frendes and thin enemies. And as touching thy frendes, thou shalt consider which of hem ben most feithful and most wise, and eldest and most appreved in conseilling: and of hem shalt thou axe thy conseil, as the cas requireth.

I say, that first ye shuln clepe to youre conseil youre frendes that ben trewe. For Salomon saith: that right as the herte of a man deliteth in savour that is swote, right so the conseil of trewe frendes yeveth swetenesse to the soule. He sayth also, ther may nothing be likened to the trewe frend: for certes gold ne silver ben not so muche worth as the good will of a trewe fiend. And eke he sayth, that a trewe frend is a strong defence; who so that it findeth, certes he findeth a gret tresor. Than shuln ye eke consider if that your trewe frendes ben discrete and wise: for the book saith, axe alway thy conseil of hem that ben wise. And by this same reson shuln ye clepen to youre conseil youre frendes that ben of age, swiche as han seyn and ben expert in many thinges, and ben appreved in conseillinges. For the book sayth, in olde men is al the sapience, and in longe time the prudence. And Tullius sayth, that grete thinges ne ben not ay accomplised by strengthe, ne by delivernesse[1] of body, but by good conseil, by auctoritee of persones, and by science: the which three thinges ne ben not feble by age, but certes they enforcen and encresen day by day. And than shuln ye kepe this for a general reule. First ye shuln clepe to youre conseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salomon saith; many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese thee on to be thy conseillour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe, thou mayest afterwarde tell it to mo folk, if it be nede. But loke alway that thy conseillours have thilke three conditions that I have sayd before; that is to say, that they be trewe wise,

[1] Agility.

and of olde experience. And werke not alway in every nede by on conseillour allone: for somtime behoveth it to be conseilled by many. For Salomon sayth; salvation of thinges is wher as ther ben many conseillours.

Now sith that I have told you of which folk ye shulde be conseilled: now wol I teche you which conseil ye ought to eschue. First ye shuln eschue the conseilling of fooles; for Salomon sayth, Take no conseil of a fool: for he ne can not conseille but after his owen lust and his affection. The book sayth, the propretee of a fool is this: He troweth lightly harme of every man, and lightly troweth all bountee in himself. Thou shalt eke eschue the conseilling of all flaterers, swiche as enforcen hem rather to preisen youre persone by flaterie, than for to tell you the sothfastnesse of thinges.

Wherfore Tullius sayth, Among alle the pestilences that ben in frendship, the gretest is flaterie. And therfore it is more nede that thou eschue and drede flaterers, than any other peple. The book saith, Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flatering preisers, than fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith thee sothes. Salomon saith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare to cacchen innocentes. He sayth also, He that speketh to his frend wordes of swetenesse and of plesaunce, he setteth a net beforne his feet to cacchen him. And therfore sayth Tullius, Encline not thin eres to flaterers, ne take no conseil of wordes of flaterie. And Caton sayth, Avise thee wel, and eschue wordes of swetenesse and of plesaunce. And eke thou shalt eschue the conseilling of thin olde enemies that ben reconciled. The book sayth, that no wight retourneth safely into the grace of his olde enemie. And Ysope sayth, Ne trost not to hem, to which thou hast somtime had werre or enmitee, ne telie hem not thy conseil. And Senek telleth the cause why. It may not be, sayth he, ther as gret fire hath long time endured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour of warmnesse. And therfore saith Salomon, In thin olde foo trost thou never. For sikerly, though thin enemie be reconciled, and maketh thee chere of humilitee, and louteth[1] to thee with his hed, ne trost him never: for certes he maketh thilke feined humilitee more for his profite, than for any love of thy persone; because that he demeth to have victorie over thy persone

[1] Boweth.

by swiche feined contenance, the which victorie he might not have by strif of werre. And Peter Alphonse sayth; Make no felawship with thin olde enemies, for if thou do hem bountee, they wollen perverten it to wickednesse. And eke thou must eschue the conseilling of hem that ben thy servaunts, and beren thee gret reverence: for paraventure they fein it more for drede than for love. And therfore saith a philosophre in this wise: Ther is no wight parfitly trewe to him that he to sore dredeth. And Tullius sayth, Ther n'is no might so gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of folk that ben dronkelewe, for they ne can no conseil hide. For Salomon sayth, Ther n'is no privetee ther as regneth dronkennesse. Ye shuln also have in suspect the conseilling of swiche folk as conseille you o thing prively, and conseille you the contrarie openly. For Cassiodore sayth, That it is a manere sleighte to hinder his enemy whan he sheweth to don a thing openly, and werketh prively the contrary. Thou shalt also have in suspect the conseilling of wicked folk, for hir conseil is alway ful of fraude. And David sayth; Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the conseilling of shrewes. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of yonge folk, for hir conseilling is not ripe, as Salomon saith.

Now, Sire, sith I have shewed you of which folk ye shullen take youre conseil, and of which folk ye shullen eschue the conseil, now wol I teche you how ye shuln examine your conseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examining than of your conseillours, ye shuln considre many thinges. Alderfirst thou shalt considre that in thilke thing that thou purposest, and upon what thing that thou wolt have conseil, that veray trouthe be said and conserved; this is to say, telle trewely thy tale: for he that sayth false, may not wel be conseilled in that cas, of which he lieth. And after this, thou shalt considre the thinges that accorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if reson accord therto, and eke if thy might may atteine therto, and if the more part and the better part of thin conseillours accorden therto or no. Than shalt thou considre what thing shal folwe of that conseilling; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profite, or domage, and many other thinges: and in alle thinges thou shalt chese the beste, and weive alle other thinges. Than shalt thou considre of what roote is engendred the matere of thy conseil, and

what fruit it may conceive and engendre. Thou shalt eke considre alle the causes, from whennes they ben sprongen. And whan thou hast examined thy conseil, as I have said, and which partie is the better and more profitable, and hast appreved it by many wise folk and olde, than shalt thou considre, if thou mayst performe it and maken of it a good ende. For certes reson wol not that any man shulde beginne a thing, but if he mighte performe it as him oughte: ne no wight shulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he might not beren it. For the proverbe sayth; he that to muche embraceth distreineth litel. And Caton sayth; assay to do swiche thinges as thou hast power to don, lest the charge oppresse thee so sore, that thee behoveth to weive thing that thou hast begonne. And if so be that thou be in doute, whether thou mayst performe a thing or non, chese rather to suffre than to beginne. And Peter Alphonse sayth; If thou hast might to don a thing, of which thou must repente, it is better nay than ya: this is to sayn, that thee is better to holde thy tonge stille than for to speke. Than mayst thou understonde by stronger resons, that if thou hast power to performe a werk, of which thou shalt repente, than is thee better that thou suffre than beginne. Wel sain they that defenden every wight to assaye a thing of which he is in doute, whether he may performe it or non. And after whan ye han examined youre conseil, as I have said beforne, and knowen wel that ye moun performe youre emprise, conferme it than sadly[1] til it be at an ende.

Now is it reson and time that I shewe you whan, and wherfore, that ye moun chaunge your conseil, withouten repreve. Sothly, a man may change his purpos and his conseil, if the cause ceseth, or whan a newe cas betideth. For the lawe saith, that upon thinges that newly betiden, behoveth newe conseil. And Seneca sayth; if thy conseil is comen to the eres of thin enemies, chaunge thy conseil. Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil, if so be that thou find that by errour, or by other cause, harme or damage may betide. Also if thy conseil be dishoneste, other elles[2] come of dishoneste cause, chaunge thy conseil: for the lawes sain, that all behestes that ben dishoneste ben of no value: and eke, if so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be performed or kept.

[1] Seriously. [2] Or else.

And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is affermed so strongly, that it may not be chaunged for no condition that may betide, I say that thilke conseil is wicked.

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wif dame Prudence, answered in this wise. Dame, quod he, as yet unto this time ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I shal governe me in the chesing and in the withholding of my conseillours: but now wold I fain that ye wold condescend in especial, and telle me how liketh you, or what semeth you by oure conseillours that we han chosen in oure present nede.

My lord, quod she, I beseche you in alle humblesse, that ye wol not wilfully replie agein my resons, ne distempre your herte, though I speke thing that you displese; for God wote that, as in min entente, I speke it for your beste, for youre honour and for youre profite eke, and sothly I hope that youre benignitee wol taken it in patience. And trosteth me wel, quod she, that youre conseil as in this cas ne shulde not (as to speke proprely) be called a conseilling, but a motion or a meving of folie, in which conseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise.

First and forward, ye han erred in the assembling of youre conseillours; for ye sholde first han cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after ye mighte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadde be nede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your conseil a gret multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to here. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye shulde han only cleped to youre conseile youre trewe frendes, olde and wise, ye han cleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flaterers, and enemies reconciled, and folk that don you reverence withouten love. And eke ye han erred, for ye han brought with you to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse, the which three thinges ben contrary to every conseil honest and profitable: the which three thinges ye ne han not anientissed[1] or destroyed, neither in youreself ne in youre conseillours, as you ought. Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours youre talent and youre affections to make werre anon, and for to do vengeaunce, and they han espied by youre wordes to what thing ye ben enclined: and therfore han they conseilled you rather to youre talent, than to youre profite. Ye

[1] Reduced to nothing.

han erred also, for it semeth that you sufficeth to han ben conseilled by thise conseillours only, and with litel avis, wheras in so high and so gret a nede, it had ben necessarie mo conseillours, and more deliberation to performe your emprise. Ye han erred also, for ye han not examined your conseil in the foresaid manere, ne in due manere, as the cas requireth. Ye han erred also, for ye han maked no division betwix youre conseillours; this is to sayn, betwix your trewe frendes and your feined conseillours: ne ye han not knowe the wille of your trewe frendes, olde and wise, but ye han cast alle hir wordes in an hochepot,[1] and enclined your herte to the more part and to the greter nombre, and ther be ye condescended; and sith ye wot wel that men shuln alway finde a greter nombre of fooles than of wise men, and therfore the conseillings that ben at congregations and multitudes of folk, ther as men take more regard to the nombre, than to the sapience of persones, ye seen wel, that in swiche conseillings fooles han the maistrie. Melibeus answered and said agein: I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou hast told me herebeforne, that he n'is not to blame that chaungeth his conseil in certain cas, and for certain and just causes, I am al redy to chaunge my conseil right as thou wolt devise. The proverbe sayth; for to don sinne is mannish,[2] but certes for to persevere long in sinne is werke of the Divel.

To this sentence answered anon dame Prudence, and saide; examineth (quod she) wel your conseil, and let us see the which of hem han spoken most resonably, and taught you best conseil. And for as muche as the examination is necessarie, let us beginne at the Surgiens and at the Physiciens, that first spaken in this mater. I say that Physiciens and Surgiens han sayde you in youre conseil discretly, as hem oughte: and in hir speche saiden ful wisely, that to the office of hem apperteineth to don to every wight honour and profite, and no wight to anoye, and after hir craft to don gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce. And, Sire, right as they han answered wisely and discretly, right so rede I that they be highly and soverainly guerdoned[3] for hir noble speche, and eke for they shulden do the more ententif besinesse in the curation of thy dere doughter. For al be it so that they ben youre frendes, therfore shullen ye not suffren, that they

[1] Like our "hodge podge," a mixture of all sorts of things thrown together. [2] Human. [3] Rewarded.

serve you for nought, but ye oughte the rather guerdone hem, and shewe hem youre largesse. And as touching the proposition, which the Physiciens entreteden in this cas, this is to sain, that in maladies, that a contrarie is warished by another contrarie; I wold fain knowe how ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence. Certes, quod Melibeus, I understond it in this wise; that right as they han don me a contrarie, right so shulde I don hem another; for right as they han venged hem upon me and don me wrong, right so shal I venge me upon hem, and don hem wrong, and than have I cured a contrarie by another.

Lo, lo, quod dame Prudence, how lightly is every man enclined to his owen desire and his owen plesaunce! certes (quod she) the wordes of the Physiciens ne shulden not han ben understonden in that wise; for certes wickednesse is not contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but they ben semblable: and therfore a vengeaunce is not warished by another vengeaunce, ne a wrong by another wrong, but everich of hem encreseth and aggreggeth other. But certes the wordes of the Physiciens shulden ben understonde in this wise; for good and wickednesse ben two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and suffraunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges: but certes, wickednesse shal be warished by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And hereto accordeth Seint Poule the Apostle in many places: he sayth, ne yelde not harme for harme, ne wicked speche for wicked speche, but do wel to him that doth to thee harme, and blesse him that saith to thee harme. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wol I speke to you of the conseil, which that was yeven to you by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and old folke, that sayden alle by on accord as ye han herd beforne, that over alle thinges ye shuln do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to warnestore[1] your house: and saiden also, that in this cas you oughte for to werchen ful avisely and with gret deliberation. And, sire, as to the first point, that toucheth the keping of youre persone, ye shuln understond, that he that hath werre, shal ever more devoutly and mekely preien beforne alle thinges, that Jesu Crist of his mercie wol han him in his protection, and ben his soverains

[1] Furnish.

helping at his nede: for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept suffisantly, without the keping of oure lord Jesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the Prophete David that sayth: if God ne kepe the citee, in idel waketh he that kepeth it. Now, sire, than shuln ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben appreved and yknowe, and of hem shuln ye axen helpe, youre persone for to kepe. For Caton saith: if thou have nede of helpe, axe it of thy frendes, for ther n'is non so good a physicien as thy trewe frend. And after this than shuln ye kepe you fro alle straunge folk, and fro lieres, and have alway in suspect hir compaignie. For Piers Alphonse sayth: ne take no compaignie by the way of a straunge man, but if so be that thou have knowen him of lenger time: and if so be that he falle into thy compaignie paraventure withouten thin assent, enquere than, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversation, and of his lif beforne, and feine thy way, saying thou wolt go thider as thou wolt not go: and if he bere a spere, hold thee on the right side, and if he bere a swerd, hold thee on his left side. And after this than shuln ye kepe you wisely from all swiche manere peple as I have sayed before, and hem and hir conseil eschue. And after this than shuln ye kepe you in swiche manere, that for any presumption of youre strengthe, that ye ne despise not, ne account not the might of your adversary so lite, that ye let[1] the keping of your persone for your presumption; for every wise man dredeth his enemie. And Salomon sayth; welful[2] is he that of alle hath drede; for certes, he that thurgh the hardinesse of his herte, and thurgh the hardinesse of himself, hath to gret presumption, him shal evil betide. Than shuln ye evermo countrewaite emboyssements, and alle espiaile. For Senek sayth, that the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes; ne he ne falleth into perils, that perils eschueth. And al be it so, that it seme that thou art in siker place, yet shalt thou alway do thy diligence in keping of thy persone; this is to sayn, ne be not negligent to kepe thin persone, not only fro thy gretest enemy, but also fro thy leste enemy. Senek sayth; a man that is wel avised, he dredeth his leste enemie. Ovide sayth, that the litel wesel wol slee the gret boll and the wilde hart. And the book[3] sayth; a

[1] Let go of. [2] Prosperous, happy. [3] *I. e.*, the Bible.

litel thorne may prikke a king ful sore, and a litel hound wol hold the wilde bore. But natheles, I say not thou shalt be so coward, that thou doute wher as is no drede. The book saith, that som men [han taught hir deceivour, for they han to muche dreded] to be deceived. Yet shalt thou drede to be empoysoned; and [therfore shalt thou] kepe thee fro the compagnie of scorners: for the book sayth, with scorners ne make no compagnie, but flee hir wordes as venime.

Now as to the second point, wheras youre wise conseillours conseilled you to warnestore your hous with gret diligence, I wolde fain knowe how that ye understode thilke wordes, and what is youre sentence.

Melibeus answered and saide; Certes I understond it in this wise, that I shal warnestore[1] min hous with toures, swiche as han castelles and other manere edifices, and armure, and artelries, by which thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and defenden, that min enemies shuln ben in drede min hous for to approche.

To this sentence answered anon Prudence. Warnestoring (quod she) of heighe toures and of grete edifices, is with grete costages and with grete travaille; and whan that they ben accompliced, yet ben they not worth a stre, but if they ben defended by trewe frendes, that ben olde and wise. And understonde wel, that the greteste and strongeste garneson that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is, that he be beloved with his subgets, and with his neigheboures. For thus sayth Tullius, that ther is a maner garneson, that no man may venquish ne discomfite, and that is a lord to be beloved of his citizeins, and of his peple.

Now, sire, as to the thridde point, wheras youre olde and wise conseillours sayden, that you ne oughte not sodeinly ne hastily proceden in this nede, but that you oughte purveyen[2] and appareilen you in this cas, with gret diligence and gret deliberation; trewely, I trowe, that they sayden right wisely and right soth. For Tullius sayth: in every nede er thou beginne it, appareile thee with gret diligence. Than say I, that in vengeaunce taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warnestoring,[3] er thou beginne, I rede that thou appareile thee therto, and do it with gret deliberation. For Tullius sayth, that longe appareiling

[1] Provide, furnish. [2] Provide. [3] Furnishing.

tofore the bataille, maketh short victorie. And Cassiodorus sayth: the garneson is stronger, whan it is longe time avised.

But now let us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neigheboures, swiche as don you reverence withouten love; youre olde enemies reconciled; your flatereres, that conseilled you certain thinges prively, and openly conseilled you the contrarie; the yonge folk also, that conseilled you to venge you, and to make werre anon. Certes, sire, as I have sayde beforne, ye han gretly erred to han cleped swiche maner folk to youre conseil, which conseillours ben ynough reproved by the resons aforesaid. But natheles, let us now descende to the special. Ye shul first proceden after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes the trouthe of this matere or of this conseil nedeth not diligently to enquere, for it is wel wist, which they ben that han don to you this trespas and vilanie, and how many trespasours, and in what manere they han don to you all this wrong, and all this vilanie. And after this, than shuln ye examine the second condition, which that the same Tullius addeth in this matere. For Tullius putteth a thing, which that he clepeth consenting: this is to sayn, who ben they, and which ben they, and how many, that consenten to thy conseil in thy wilfulnesse, to don hastif vengeaunce. And let us considre also who ben they, and how many ben they, and which ben they, that consenteden to youre adversaries. As to the first point, it is wel knowen which folk they be that consenteden to youre wilfulnesse. For trewely, all tho that conseileden you to maken sodein werre, ne ben not youre frendes. Let us now considre which ben they that ye holden so gretly youre frendes, as to youre persone: for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye ne ben but allone: for certes ye ne han no child but a doughter, ne ye ne han no brethren, ne cosins germains, ne non other nigh kinrede, wherfore that youre enemies for drede shulde stinte to plede with you, or to destroye youre persone. Ye knowen also, that your richesses moten ben dispended in diverse parties; and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel regard to venge youre deth. But thin enemies ben three, and they han many brethren, children, cosins, and other nigh kinrede: and though so were, that thou haddest slain of hem two or three, yet dwellen there ynow to wreken hir deth and to slee thy persone. And though

so be that youre kinrede be more stedefast and siker than the kin of your adversaries, yet natheles youre kinrede is but a fer kinrede; they ben but litel sibbe[1] to you, and the kin of youre enemies ben nigh sibbe to hem. And certes as in that, hir condition is better than youres. Than let us considre also of the conseilling of hem that conseilled you to take sodein vengeance, whether it accorde to reson: and certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and reson, ther may no man taken vengeaunce on no wight, but the juge that hath the jurisdiction of it, whan it is ygraunted him to take thilke vengeaunce hastily, or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepeth consenting, thou shalt considre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnesse, and to thy conseillours: and certes, thou mayest wel say, that nay; for sikerly, as for to speke proprely, we moun do nothing but only swiche thing as we moun don rightfully: and certes rightfully ye ne mowe take no vengeance, as of your proper auctoritee. Than mowe ye sen that your power ne consenteth not, ne accordeth not to youre wilfulnesse. Now let us examine the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth consequent. Thou shalt understonde, that the vengeaunce that thou purposest for to take, is the consequent, and therof folweth another vengeance, peril, and werre, and other damages withouten nombre, of which we ben not ware, as at this time. And as touching the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth engendring, thou shalt consider, that this wrong which that is don to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin enemies, and of the vengeaunce taking upon that wold engender another vengeaunce, and muchel sorwe and wasting of richesses, as I sayde ere.

Now, sire, as to the point, that Tullius clepeth causes, which that is the last point, thou shalt understonde, that the wrong that thou hast received, hath certaine causes, which that clerkes clepen *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *causa longinqua*, and *causa propinqua*, this is to sayn, the fer cause, and the nigh cause. The fer cause is almighty God, that is cause of alle thinges: the ner cause, is thin three enemies; the cause accidental was hate; the cause material, ben the five woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal, is the maner of hir werking, that broughten ladders, and

[1] Related, allied.

clomben in at thy windowes; the cause final was for to slee thy doughter; it letted not in as muche as in hem was. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende they shuln come, or what shal finally betide of hem in this cas, ne can I not deme, but by conjecting and supposing: for we shuln suppose, that they shuln come to a wicked ende, because that the book of Decrees sayth: Selden or with gret peine ben causes ybrought to a good ende, whan they ben badly begonne.

Now, sire, if men wold axen me, why that God suffred men to do you this vilanie, certes I can not wel answer, as for no sothfastnesse. For the Apostle sayth, that the sciences, and the jugements of oure Lord God Almighty ben ful depe; ther may no man comprehend ne serche hem suffisantly. Natheles, by certain presumptions and conjectings, I hold and beleve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisenesse, hath suffered this betide, by just cause resonable.

Thy name is Melibee, this is to sayn, a man that drinketh hony. Thou hast dronke so muche hony of swete temporel richesses, and delices, and honours of this world, that thou art dronken, and hast forgetten Jesu Crist thy creatour: thou ne hast not don to him swiche honour and reverence as thee ought, ne thou ne hast wel ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that sayth: Under the honey of the goodes of thy body is hid the venime that sleth the soule. And Salomon sayth: If thou hast founden hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and poure. And peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath tourned away fro thee his face, and his eres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred, that thou hast ben punished in the manere that thou hast ytrespased. Thou hast don sinne again oure Lord Crist, for certes the three enemies of mankind, that is to sayn, the flesh, the fend, and the world, thou hast suffred hem entre into thin herte wilfully, by the windowes of thy body, and hast not defended thyself suffisantly agein hir assautes, and hir temptations, so that they han wounded thy soule in five places, this is to sayn the dedly sinnes that ben entred into thyn herte by thy five wittes: and in the same manere our Lord Crist hath wold and suffred, that thy three enemies ben entred into thyn hous by the windowes, and han ywounded thy doughter in the foresayd manere.

Certes, quod Melibee, I see wel that ye enforce you muchel by wordes to overcomen me, in swiche manere, that I shal not venge me on mine enemies, shewing me the perils and the evils that mighten falle of this vengeaunce: but who so wolde considre in alle vengeaunces the perils and evils that mighten sue of vengeaunce taking, a man wold never take vengeaunce, and that were harme: for by the vengeaunce taking ben the wicked men dissevered fro the goode men. And they that han will to do wickednesse, restreinen hir wicked purpos, whan they sen the punishing and the chastising of the trespasours. [To this answered dame Prudence: Certes, quod she, I graunte you that of vengeaunce taking cometh muche evil and muche good; but vengeaunce taking apperteineth not to everich on, but only to juges, and to hem that han the jurisdiction over the trespasours;] and yet say I more, that right as a singuler persone sinneth in taking vengeaunce of another man, right so sinneth the juge, if he do no vengeaunce of hem that it han deserved. For Senek sayth thus: That maister (he sayth) is good, that preveth shrewes. And Cassiodore saith: A man dredeth to do outrages, whan he wot and knoweth, that it displeseth to the juges and soverains. And another sayth: The juge that dredeth to do right, maketh men shrewes. And Seint Poule the Apostle sayth in his Epistle, whan he writeth unto the Romaines, that the juges beren not the spere withouten cause, but they beren it to punishe the shrewes and misdoers, and for to defende the goode men. If ye wiln than take vengeaunce of youre enemies, ye shuln retourne or have your recours to the juge, that hath the jurisdiction upon hem, and he shal punishe hem, as the lawe axeth and requireth.

A, sayd Melibee, this vengeaunce liketh me nothing. I bethink me now, and take hede how that fortune hath norished me fro my childhode, and hath holpen me to passe many a stronge pas: now wol I assayen hire, trowing, with Goddes helpe, that she shal helpe me my shame for to venge.

Certes, quod Prudence, if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shuln not assaye fortune by no way: ne ye ne shuln not lene or bowe unto hire, after the wordes of Senek: for thinges that ben folily don, and tho that ben don in hope of fortune, shuln never come to good ende. And as the same Senek sayth: The more clere and the more shining that fortune is, the more brotel and the soner

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

raines from hir places, and atte laste maken hem lese hir lordshippes.

But now let us putte, that ye have leve to venge you: I say ye be not of might and power, as now to venge you: for if ye wol maken comparison unto the might of youre adversaries, ye shuln finde in many thinges, that I have shewed you er this, that hir condition is better than youres, and therfore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre and be patient.

Forthermore ye knowen wel, that after the commune saw, it is a woodnesse, a man to strive with a stronger, or a more mighty man than he is himself; and for to strive with a man of even strengthe, that is to say, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to strive with a weker man, it is folie; and therfore shulde a man flee striving, as muchel as he mighte. For Salomon sayth: It is a gret worship to a man to kepe him fro noise and strif. And if it so happe, that a man of greter mighte and strengthe than thou art, do thee grevaunce: studie and besie thee rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senek sayth, that he putteth him in a grete peril, that striveth with a greter man than he is himself. And Caton sayth; If a man of higher estat or degree, or more mighty than thou, do thee anoye or grevance, suffre him: for he that ones hath greved thee, may another time releve thee and helpe thee. Yet sette I cas,[1] ye have bothe might and licence for to venge you, I say that ther ben ful many thinges that shuln restreine you of vengeance taking, and make you for to encline to suffre, and for to han patience in the wronges that han been don to you. First and forward, if ye wol considre the defautes that ben in youre owen persone, for which defautes God hath suffred you have this tribulation, as I have sayd to you herebeforne. For the Poete sayth, that we oughten patiently taken the tribulations that comen to us, whan that we thinken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And Seint Gregorie sayth, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes and of his sinnes, the peines and the tribulations that he suffereth, semen the lesse unto him. And in as muche as him thinketh his sinnes more hevy and grevous, in so muche semeth his peine the lighter and the esier unto him. Also ye owen to encline and bowe

[1] I put the case, I suppose.

youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Peter in his Epistles. Jesu Crist (he saith) hath suffred for us, and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and sue him, for he dide never sinne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Also the gret patience, which Seintes, that ben in Paradis, han had in tribulations that they han suffred, withouten hir desert or gilt, oughte muchel stirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye shulde enforce you to have patience, considering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and sone passed ben and gon, and the joye that a man seketh to han by patience in tribulations is perdurable; after that the Apostle sayth in his Epistle; the joye of God, he sayth, is perdurable, that is to sayn, everlasting. Also troweth and beleveth stedfastly, that he n'is not wel ynorished ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Salomon sayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is knowen by patience. And in another place he sayeth, that he that is patient, governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salomon saith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noises, and the patient man attempreth and stilleth hem. He saith also, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right strong. And he that may have the lordshipe of his owen herte, is more to preise, than he that by his force or strengthe taketh gret cities. And therfore sayth Seint James in his Epistle, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye seken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pees, unto the time it be venged. And al be it so, that it was gret peril to min enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeaunce upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir corage: and therfore me thinketh men oughten not repreve me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to sayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye sayn your will and as you liketh; but in no cas of the world a man shulde not don outrage ne excesse, for to vengen him. For Cassiodore

sayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye shuln venge you after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and not by excesse, ne by outrage. And also if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye sinnen. And therfore sayth Senek, that a man shal never venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting: certes ye say soth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte swiche attemperaunce in his defence, that men have no cause ne mater to repreve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and excesse, for elles were it againe reson. Parde ye knowen wel, that ye maken no defence as now, for to defende you, but for to venge you: and so sheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre dede attemprely; and therfore me thinketh that patience is good. For Salomon sayth, that he that is not patient, shal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan a man is impatient and wrothe of that that toucheth him not, and that apperteineth not unto him, though it harme him it is no wonder. For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremeteth or medleth with swiche thing, as apperteineth not unto him. And Salomon saith, that he that entremeteth of the noise or strif of another man, is like to him that taketh a straunge hound by the eres: for right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is reson that he have harme, that by his impatience medleth him of the noise of another man, wheras it apperteineth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, my greef and my disese, toucheth me right nigh. And therfore though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mervaille: and (saving your grace) I cannot see that it might gretly harme me, though I took vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than min enemies ben: and wel knowe ye, that by money and by having gret possessions, ben alle thinges of this world governed. And Salomon sayth, that alle thinges obeye to money.

Whan Prudence had herd hire husbond avaunte him of his richesse and of his money, dispreising the power of his adversaries, she spake and sayd in this wise: Certes, dere

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First, ye shuln geten hem withouten gret desir, by good leiser, sokingly,[2] and not over hastifly, for a man that is to desiring to gete richesses, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle other eviles. And therfore sayth Salomon: He that hasteth him to beaily to wexe riche, he shal be non

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Than thus in geting richesses ye musten flee idelnesse. And afterward ye shuln usen the richesses, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in swiche manere, that men holde you not to scarce ne to sparing, ne fool-large, that is to say, over large a spender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, because of his scarcitee and chincherie,[1] in the same wise is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Caton: Use

[1] I can find nothing nearer to this in Cato, than the maxim, L. iii. Dist. 7. *Segnitiem fugito.*—For the quotations from the same author in the following page, see L. iv. Dist. 17, and L. iii. Dist. 23.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Over-sparingness, niggardness.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

and have grete richesses. And yet I say forther-
hat ye shulden alway do youre besinesse to gete
hesses, so that ye gete hem with good conscience.
he Apostle sayth, that ther n'is thing in this world
ich we shulden have so gret joye, as whan oure con-
e bereth us good witnesse. And the wise man sayth:
ubstaunce of a man is ful good, whan sinne is not
annes conscience. Afterward, in geting of youre
ses, and in using of hem, ye must have gret besinesse
gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept
onserved. For Salomon sayth, that beter it is, and
it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to
grete richesses: and therfore he sayth in another
e: Do grete diligence (saith Salomon) in keping of
frendes, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abide
thee, than any tresor, be it never so precious. And
es, he shulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God
good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence
besinesse, to kepen his good name. And Cassiodore
th, that it is a signe of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth
desireth to have a good name. And therfore sayth
int Augustine, that ther ben two thinges that arn right
cessarie and nedeful; and that is good conscience, and
od los: that is to sayn, good conscience to thin owen
rsone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward.
nd he that trosteth him so muchel in his good conscience,
nat he despiseth and setteth at nought his good name or
os, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name,
'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I shewed you how ye shulden do in geting richesses, and how ye shuln usen hem: and I see wel that for the trust that ye han in youre richesses, ye wiln meve werre and bataille. I conseille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in trust of youre richesses, for they ne sufficen not werres to mainteine. And therfore sayth a Philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algates han werre, shal never have suffisaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter dispences must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon saith, that the greter richesses that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your richesses ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in ther manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite:

for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly[1] (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man slain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril.

After that dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resons, that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses wexen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and moste soveraine thing, that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Aposties in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshipe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat

[1] As easily.

and brige[1] by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshipe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreising, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mishappe and mistide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by swete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

[1] Contention.

Than said Melibee; I shall not conne answere unto many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: ar shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto h and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges t ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled u him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebefor God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and dis for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sen youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at yo feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundemen For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesa and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the man adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pe and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with yo adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe th it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you t more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liki for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will o hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hir self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto good ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise ad versaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, an the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille and dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche nevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men

youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Peter in his Epistles. Jesu Crist (he saith) hath suffred for us, and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and sue him, for he dide never sinne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Also the gret patience, which Seintes, that ben in Paradis, han had in tribulations that they han suffred, withouten hir desert or gilt, oughte muchel stirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye shulde enforce you to have patience, considering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and sone passed ben and gon, and the joye that a man seketh to han by patience in tribulations is perdurable; after that the Apostle sayth in his Epistle; the joye of God, he sayth, is perdurable, that is to sayn, everlasting. Also troweth and beleveth stedfastly, that he n'is not wel ynorished ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Salomon sayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is knowen by patience. And in another place he sayeth, that he that is patient, governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salomon saith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noises, and the patient man attempreth and stilleth hem. He saith also, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right strong. And he that may have the lordshipe of his owen herte, is more to preise, than he that by his force or strengthe taketh gret citees. And therfore sayth Seint James in his Epistle, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye seken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pees, unto the time it be venged. And al be it so, that it was gret peril to min enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeaunce upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir corage: and therfore me thinketh men oughten not repreve me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to sayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye sayn your will and as you liketh; but in no cas of the world a man shulde not don outrage ne excesse, for to vengen him. For Cassiodore

sayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye shuln venge you after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and not by excesse, ne by outrage. And also if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye sinnen. And therfore sayth Senek, that a man shal never venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting: certes ye say soth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte swiche attemperaunce in his defence, that men have no cause ne mater to repreve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and excesse, for elles were it againe reson. Parde ye knowen wel, that ye maken no defence as now, for to defende you, but for to venge you: and so sheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre dede attemprely; and therfore me thinketh that patience is good. For Salomon sayth, that he that is not patient, shal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan a man is impatient and wrothe of that that toucheth him not, and that apperteineth not unto him, though it harme him it is no wonder. For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremeteth or medleth with swiche thing, as apperteineth not unto him. And Salomon saith, that he that entremeteth of the noise or strif of another man, is like to him that taketh a straunge hound by the eres: for right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is reson that he have harme, that by his impatience medleth him of the noise of another man, wheras it apperteineth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, my greef and my disese, toucheth me right nigh. And therfore though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mervaille: and (saving your grace) I cannot see that it might gretly harme me, though I took vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than min enemies ben: and wel knowe ye, that by money and by having gret possessions, ben alle thinges of this world governed. And Salomon sayth, that alle thinges obeye to money.

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First, ye shuln geten hem withouten gret desir, by good leiser, sokingly,[2] and not over hastifly, for a man that is to desiring to gete richesses, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle other eviles. And therfore sayth Salomon: He that hasteth him to besily to wexe riche, he shal be non

[1] Neatherd's. [2] Gently.

innocent. He sayth also, that the richesse that hastily cometh to a man, sone and lightly goeth and passeth from a man, but that richesse that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alway and multiplieth. And, Sire, ye shulen get richesses by youre wit and by youre travaille, unto youre profite, and that withouten wrong or harme doing to any other persone. For the lawe sayth: Ther maketh no man himself riche, if he do harme to another wight; this is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himself riche, unto the harme of another persone. And Tullius sayth, that no sorwe, ne no drede of deth, ne nothing that may falle unto a man, is so muchel ageins nature, as a man to encrese his owen profite, to harme of another man. And though the grete men and the mighty men geten richesses more lightly than thou, yet shalt thou not ben idel ne slowe to do thy profite, for thou shalt in alle wise flee idelnesse. For Salomon sayth, that idelnesse techeth a man to do many eviles. And the same Salomon sayth, that he that travailleth and besieth him to tillen his loud, shal ete bred: but he that is idel, and casteth him to no besinesse ne occupation, shal falle into poverte, and die for hunger. And he that is idel and slow, can never find covenable time for to do his profite. For ther is a versifiour sayth, that the idel man excuseth him in Winter, because of the grete cold, and in Summer by encheson of the hete. For thise causes, sayth Caton, waketh,[1] and enclineth you not over muchel to slepe, for over muchel reste norisheth and causeth many vices. And therfore sayth Seint Jerome; Doeth som good dedes, that the devil which is oure enemie, ne finde you not unoccupied, for the devil ne taketh not lightly unto his werking swiche as he findeth occupied in goode werkes.

Than thus in geting richesses ye musten flee idelnesse. And afterward ye shuln usen the richesses, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in swiche manere, that men holde you not to scarce ne to sparing, ne fool-large, that is to say, over large a spender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, because of his scarcitee and chincherie,[1] in the same wise is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Caton: Use

[1] I can find nothing nearer to this in Cato, than the maxim, L. iii. Dist. 7. *Segnitiem fugito.*—For the quotations from the same author in the following page, see L. iv. Dist. 17, and L. iii. Dist. 23.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Over-sparingness, niggardness.

earth yet he ordeineth that they ben kept [illegible] in such manere that they ben to many to make the other wrecche to encrese: for it is a gret almesse to a man to leve a poure herte and a mete purse. He sayth eke: He goodes that thou hast yeven me kepe hem by measure, that is to seyn, spende honestly of hem that thy wyfe and children ne goodes that they have, wyl ther not to more procure ne for hem, than they shoulden have to the goodes of another man. And thus ye shuln see evidente, many your richesses in sweche manere that men seyn not that your richesses ben yloren, but that ye have hem in youre kepyng, and in youre warde. For a wise man reherceth the avaricious man, and seyth thus in this wyse. Herto and why herieth a man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knoweth wel, that nedes must he die, for nede is the end of every man, as in this present life? and for what cause or occasion gadereth he him, or amasseth he him so fast into his goodes, that he ne wot wel how, ne remembreth him, ne lerneth him from his goodes, and knoweth wel or ought to knowe, that whan he is ded he nas nothing here with him out of this world. And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that the avaricious man is likened unto helle, that the more it swolweth, the more hete it hath to swolwe and devoure. And as wel is ye wonder enemie to be called an avaricious man or unmete, as wel shulde ye kepe you and governe you in swiche a wise, that men calle you not hoot-large. Therfore sayth Tullius: The goodes of thin hous ne shulde not ben hid ne kept so nose, but that they might ben opened by pitee and freedomesse; that is to sayn, to yeve hem part that han gret nede; ne thy goodes shulden not ben so open, to be every mannes goodes. Afterward, in yeving of your richesses and in using of hem, ye shuln alway have three thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye shuln have God in youre herte, and for no richesse ye shuln do no thing, which may in any manere displese God that is your creatour and maker. For after the word of Salomon, it is better to have a litel good with love of God, than to have muchel good, and lese the love of his Lord God. And the Prophete sayth, That better it is to ben a good man, and have litel good and tresor, than to be holden a

[1] Usage.

shrewe, and have grete richesses. And yet I say forthermore, that ye shulden alway do youre besinesse to gete you richesses, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the Apostle sayth, that ther n'is thing in this world of which we shulden have so gret joye, as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnesse. And the wise man sayth: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan sinne is not in mannes conscience. Afterward, in geting of youre richesses, and in using of hem, ye must have gret besinesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salomon sayth, that beter it is, and more it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete richesses: and therfore he sayth in another place: Do grete diligence (saith Salomon) in keping of thy frendes, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abide with thee, than any tresor, be it never so precious. And certes, he shulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and besinesse, to kepen his good name. And Cassiodore sayth, that it is a signe of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth and desireth to have a good name. And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that ther ben two thinges that arn right necessarie and nedeful; and that is good conscience, and good los: that is to sayn, good conscience to thin owen persone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward. And he that trosteth him so muchel in his good conscience, that he despiseth and setteth at nought his good name or los, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name, n'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I shewed you how ye shulden do in geting richesses, and how ye shuln usen hem: and I see wel that for the trust that ye han in youre richesses, ye wiln meve werre and bataille. I conseille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in trust of youre richesses, for they ne sufficen not werres to mainteine. And therfore sayth a Philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algates han werre, shal never have suffisaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter dispences must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon saith, that the greter richesses that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your richesses ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in other manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite:

for the victorie of batailles that ben in this worlde, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly[1] (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man slain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril.

After that dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resons, that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses wexen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and moste soveraine thing, that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel. that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshipe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat

[1] As easily.

and brige[1] by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshipe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreising, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mishappe and mistide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by swete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

[1]Contention.

Than said Melibee; I shall not comme answere unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: myn shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebefore, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonnaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the auswer of thise men

she bad hem go agein prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir sinnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han well and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste, and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede.

And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes.[1] And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, besechíng you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain

[1] Pledged.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce. in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for Seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:
For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt[1] or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.[2]
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,[3]
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul[4] a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,
To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn

[1] A person doing penance.
[2] The officer in a monastery who had the care of the provisions.
[3] In my opinion.
[4] *I. e.*, a cock.

Of rauling, and we hevel mun hen shrimpen:
Of hine mun ther comen wrotched impen.
Thus maketh that our heires hen so sclendre
And feble, that they mown not wel engendre.
Thus maketh that our wives wel ensure
Rather[1] unto, for they mown better pave
Of[1] mine pavementes than mowen we:
Gad wote, no lussheburghes[1] payen we.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Yit mi in game a sothe have I herd say.
  Thus endeth Mighte take all in patience,
And smile: I wol hir al my diligence,
As fer as sownith into honestee,
To folwen you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to herken hiderward,
I wol you seyn the lif of Seint Edward;
Or elles tragedies first I wol telle.
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
  Tragedie is to seyn a certain storie,
As olde bokes maken us memorie,
Of him that stood in grete prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
Into miserie, and endeth wretchedly.
And they ben versified commonly
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron:[2]
In prose eke ben endited many on,
And eke in metre, in many a sondry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought[1] enough suffice.
  Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.
But first I you beseche in this matere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise things,
Be it of popes, emperoures, or kinges,
After hir ages, as men written finde,
But telle hem som before and som behinde,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of min ignorance.

[1] These terms, first imported, as Skinner thinks, from Luxemburg.—Tyrwhitt.

[2] It is true that the tragic Iambic verse is an Hexameter, as regards the number of its metres; but that term is usually applied to the heroic verse, composed of dactyls and spondees.

The Monkes Tale.

13997–14024.

I wol bewaile in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem, that stode in high degree,
And fellen so, that there n'as no remedie
To bring hem out of hire adversitee.
For certain whan that fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man of hire the cours withholde:
Let no man trust on blinde prosperitee;
Beth ware by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

LUCIFER.

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And not a man, at him I wol beginne.
For though fortune may non angel dere,[1]
From high degree yet fell he for his sinne
Doun into helle, whereas he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, that maist not twinne[2]
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

ADAM.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damascene
With Goddes owen finger wrought was he,
And not begeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte[3] all Paradis saving o tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, til he for misgovernance
Was driven out of his prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschance.

SAMPSON.

Lo Sampson, which that was annunciat
By the angel, long or his nativitee:
And was to God Almighty consecrat,
And stode in noblesse while he mighte see:

[1] Hurt. [2] Depart, turn. [3] Governed, ruled.

for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly[1] (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man slain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril.

After that dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resons, that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses wexen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and moste soveraine thing, that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Aposties in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshipe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat

[1] As easily.

and brige[1] by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshipe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreising, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mishappe and mistide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by swete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

[1]Contention.

Than said Melibee; I shall not conne answere unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebeforen, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men

she bad hem go agein prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir sinnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han well and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste, and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede.

And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes.[1] And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, besechíng you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain

[1] Pledged.

day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and jugement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the causes aforesaid; which thinges ordeined, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that Dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined[1] and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his besinesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye mustdeme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And

[1] Asked.

Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce. in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for Seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*

THE MONKES PROLOGUE.

13895–13920.

WHAN ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and hire benignitee,
Our hoste saide: as I am faithful man,
And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,[1]
I hadde lever than a barell of ale,
That goode lefe my wif had herde this tale:
For she n'is no thing of swiche patience,
As was this Melibeus wif Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me the grete clobbed staves,
And cryeth; slee the dogges everich on,
And breke hem bothe bak and every bon.
And if that any neighebour of mine
Wol not in chirche to my wif encline,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespace.
Whan she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
And cryeth; false coward, wreke thy wif:
By *corpus Domini*, I wol have thy knif,
And thou shalt have my distaf, and go spinne.
Fro day til night right thus wol she beginne.
Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That wol ben overladde with every wight!
Thou darst not stonden by thy wives right.
This is my lif, but if that I wol fight,
And out at dore anon I mote me dight,

[1] The body of St. Mathurin is probably the one meant. See his story in the *Golden Legende*, Edit. 1527, by Winkin de Worde, 151. — "Than toke they *the precious body* and enoynted it with moche reverence; and when they had layd it in the erth, on the morowe they came to the sepulture and founde *the holy body* above the erth nygh unto the same sepulture, and than were they all abasshed and wyst not what to do." It seems, the knightes, who had brought him out of France, had promised that, if he died on his journey, he should be sent back and buried "where as they had taken him;" and therefore his body would not stay in the ground, till it was deposited, according to promise, in France, where it afterwards worked many miracles.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:
For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt[1] or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.[2]
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,[3]
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul[4] a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,
To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn

[1] A person doing penance.
[2] The officer in a monastery who had the care of the provisions.
[3] In my opinion.
[4] *I. e.*, a cock.

Of treding, and we borel men ben shrimpes:
Of feble trees ther comen wretched impes.
This maketh that our heires ben so sclendre
And feble, that they moun not wel engendre.
This maketh that our wives wol assaye
Religious folk, for they moun better paye
Of Venus payementes than mowen we:
God wote, no lussheburghes[1] payen ye.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Ful oft in game a sothe have I herd say.
This worthy Monke toke all in patience,
And saide; I wol don all my diligence,
As fer as souneth into honestee,
To tellen you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to herken hiderward,
I wol you sayn the lif of Seint Edward;
Or elles tragedies first I wol telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to sayn a certain storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of him that stood in gret prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
In to miserie, and endeth wretchedly.
And they ben versified communly
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron:[2]
In prose eke ben endited many on,
And eke in metre, in many a sondry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought ynough suffice.
Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.
But first I you beseche in this matere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes. emperoures, or kinges,
After hir ages, as men written finde,
But telle hem som before and som behinde,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of min ignorance.

[1] Base coins, first imported, as Skinner thinks, from Luxemburg.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] It is true that the tragic Iambic verse is an Hexameter, as regards the number of its metres; but that term is usually applied to the heroic verse, composed of dactyls and spondees.

The Monkes Tale.

13997–14024.

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The harm of hem, that stode in high degree,
And fellen so, that there n'as no remedie
To bring hem out of hire adversitee.
For certain whan that fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man of hire the cours withholde:
Let no man trust on blinde prosperitee;
Beth ware by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

LUCIFER.

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And not a man, at him I wol beginne.
For though fortune may non angel dere,[1]
From high degree yet fell he for his sinne
Doun into helle, whereas he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, that maist not twinne[2]
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

ADAM.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damascene
With Goddes owen finger wrought was he,
And not begeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte[3] all Paradis saving o tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, til he for misgovernance
Was driven out of his prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschance.

SAMPSON.

Lo Sampson, which that was annunciat
By the angel, long or his nativitee:
And was to God Almighty consecrat,
And stode in noblesse while he mighte see:

[1] Hurt. [2] Depart, turn. [3] Governed, ruled.

Than said Melibee; I shall not conne answere unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebeforen, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men

she bad hem go ageín prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir sinnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han well and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste, and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede.

And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes.[1] And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, besechinge you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain

[1] Pledged.

[illegible] to assemble unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and judgement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don as him, by the comun assentid; which thinges assembled, every man retourned to his hous.

And when that Dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

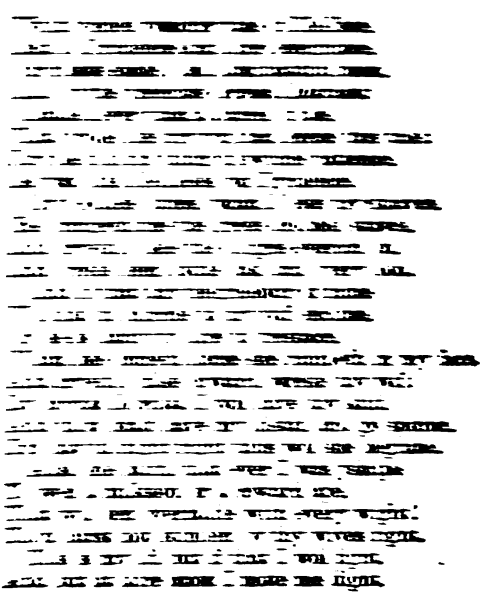
To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his besinesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye must deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye mate you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And

[1] Ashed.

Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce. in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for Seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*



"A story of St. Isidore's journey the one named. See history of the Lesser Supreme [illegible] by Wilson in Words, 151. — "Then saw they he persons sang and conveyed it with masks reverence and when they had [illegible] in the earth on the manner they came to the sepulchre and [illegible] the way many slaves the earth upon unto the same sepulchre, and then were they all astonished and wyst not what to do." It seems, the magistrate, who had brought him out of France, had promised that, if he died on his journey, he should be sent back and buried "where as they had taken him;" and therefore his body would stay in the ground, till it was deposited, according to promise, in Spain, where it afterwards worked many miracles.—Tyrwhitt.

Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:
For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt[1] or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.[2]
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,[3]
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul[4] a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,
To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn

[1] A person doing penance.
[2] The officer in a monastery who had the care of the provisions.
[3] In my opinion.
[4] *I. e.*, a cock.

for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly[1] (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man slain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eschue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal falle in peril.

After that dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resons, that ye han shewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye accorde with youre adversaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses wexen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and moste soveraine thing, that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore sayde oure Lord Jesu Crist to his Apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worshipe. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat

[1] As easily.

and brige[1] by hir outrage, and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forsoth that were not my worshipe: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreising, so fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblaunt of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistake me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete saith: Flee shrewednesse and do goodnesse; seke pees and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laste he shal mishappe and mistide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preise you. For Salomon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by swete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon saith: he is more worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

[1]Contention.

Than said Melibee; I shall not comme answere unto so many faire reasons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebefore, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

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Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han well and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is above expressed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what were best to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foresaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence, they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste, and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede.

And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes.[1] And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, besechíng you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain

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day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and jugement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the causes aforesaid; which thinges ordeined, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that Dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined[1] and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his besinesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye mustdeme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And

[1] Asked.

Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce. in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for Seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*

THE MONKES PROLOGUE.

13895–13920.

WHAN ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and hire benignitee,
Our hoste saide: as I am faithful man,
And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,[1]
I hadde lever than a barell of ale,
That goode lefe my wif had herde this tale:
For she n'is no thing of swiche patience,
As was this Melibeus wif Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me the grete clobbed staves,
And cryeth; slee the dogges everich on,
And breke hem bothe bak and every bon.
And if that any neighebour of mine
Wol not in chirche to my wif encline,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespace.
Whan she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
And cryeth; false coward, wreke thy wif:
By *corpus Domini*, I wol have thy knif,
And thou shalt have my distaf, and go spinne.
Fro day til night right thus wol she beginne.
Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That wol ben overladde with every wight!
Thou darst not stonden by thy wives right.
This is my lif, but if that I wol fight,
And out at dore anon I mote me dight,

[1] The body of St. Mathurin is probably the one meant. See his story in the *Golden Legende*, Edit. 1527, by Winkin de Worde, 151. — "Than toke they *the precious body* and enoynted it with moche reverence; and when they had layd it in the erth, on the morowe they came to the sepulture and founde *the holy body* above the erth nygh unto the same sepulture, and than were they all abasshed and wyst not what to do." It seems, the knightes, who had brought him out of France, had promised that, if he died on his journey, he should be sent back and buried "where as they had taken him;" and therefore his body would not stay in the ground, till it was deposited, according to promise, in France, where it afterwards worked many miracles.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:
For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt[1] or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.[2]
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,[3]
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul[4] a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,
To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn

[1] A person doing penance.
[2] The officer in a monastery who had the care of the provisions.
[3] In my opinion.
[4] *I. e.*, a cock.

Of treding, and we borel men ben shrimpes:
Of feble trees ther comen wretched impes.
This maketh that our heires ben so sclendre
And feble, that they moun not wel engendre.
This maketh that our wives wol assaye
Religious folk, for they moun better paye
Of Venus payementes than mowen we:
God wote, no lussheburghes[1] payen ye.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Ful oft in game a sothe have I herd say.
This worthy Monke toke all in patience,
And saide; I wol don all my diligence,
As fer as souneth into honestee,
To tellen you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to herken hiderward,
I wol you sayn the lif of Seint Edward;
Or elles tragedies first I wol telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to sayn a certain storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of him that stood in gret prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
In to miserie, and endeth wretchedly.
And they ben versified communly
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron:[2]
In prose eke ben endited many on,
And eke in metre, in many a sondry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought ynough suffice.
Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.
But first I you beseche in this matere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes. emperoures, or kinges,
After hir ages, as men written finde,
But telle hem som before and som behinde,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of min ignorance.

[1] Base coins, first imported, as Skinner thinks, from Luxemburg.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] It is true that the tragic Iambic verse is an Hexameter, as regards the number of its metres; but that term is usually applied to the heroic verse, composed of dactyls and spondees.

The Monkes Tale.

13997–14024.

I wol bewaile in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem, that stode in high degree,
And fellen so, that there n'as no remedie
To bring hem out of hire adversitee.
For certain whan that fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man of hire the cours withholde:
Let no man trust on blinde prosperitee;
Beth ware by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

LUCIFER.

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And not a man, at him I wol beginne.
For though fortune may non angel dere,[1]
From high degree yet fell he for his sinne
Doun into helle, whereas he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, that maist not twinne[2]
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

ADAM.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damascene
With Goddes owen finger wrought was he,
And not begeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte[3] all Paradis saving o tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, til he for misgovernance
Was driven out of his prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschance.

SAMPSON.

Lo Sampson, which that was annunciat
By the angel, long or his nativitee:
And was to God Almighty consecrat,
And stode in noblesse while he mighte see:

[1] Hurt. [2] Depart, turn. [3] Governed, ruled.

Than said Melibee; I shall not conne answere unto so many faire resons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebeforen, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and disese for youre sinnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol sende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is plesaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she sey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan she sey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and saide to hem, in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encresen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beseche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, so fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to us ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swiche avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie; for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shall say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maistrie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger reson he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And natheles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, save only worshipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel, and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thise men

she bad hem go agein prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowlecbing ful lowly hir sinnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesse of his sinne, that excuseth not his sinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek saith; ther is the remission and foryevenesse, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the assent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and saide; certes, sire, ye han well and goodly answered: for right as by the conseil, assent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to venge you and make werre, right so withouten hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

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And whan dame Prudence had herd the assent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye sende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede.

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And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes.[1] And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it stant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lordshipe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairetee, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee of youre gracious lordshipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, beseching you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol considere oure grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenesse of oure outragious trespas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don oure outragious giltes and trespas into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordshipe.

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And whan that Dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined[1] and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answerd, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wise gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every good man: for after the sawe of the Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to lese muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to lese good with worship, than to winne good with vilanie and shame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his besinesse, to gete him a good name. And yet shal he not only besie him in keping his good name, but he shal also enforcen him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is sone gon and passed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, considered the power that they han yeven you upon hemself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lese his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeisaunce, ye mustdeme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And

[1] Asked.

Tullius saith: ther is nothing so commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeseth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce. in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men mown have cause and matere to preise you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke saieth: he overcometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for Seint James saith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal he do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had herd the grete skilles and resons of dame Prudence, and hire wise informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to werken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the sinnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the blisse that never hath ende. *Amen.*

THE MONKES PROLOGUE.

13895–13920.

Whan ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and hire benignitee,
Our hoste saide: as I am faithful man,
And by the precious *corpus Madrian*,[1]
I hadde lever than a barell of ale,
That goode lefe my wif had herde this tale:
For she n'is no thing of swiche patience,
As was this Melibeus wif Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves,
She bringeth me the grete clobbed staves,
And cryeth; slee the dogges everich on,
And breke hem bothe bak and every bon.
And if that any neighebour of mine
Wol not in chirche to my wif encline,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespace.
Whan she cometh home she rampeth in my face,
And cryeth; false coward, wreke thy wif:
By *corpus Domini*, I wol have thy knif,
And thou shalt have my distaf, and go spinne.
Fro day til night right thus wol she beginne.
Alas, she saith, that ever I was yshape
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That wol ben overladde with every wight!
Thou darst not stonden by thy wives right.
This is my lif, but if that I wol fight,
And out at dore anon I mote me dight,

[1] The body of St. Mathurin is probably the one meant. See his story in the *Golden Legende*, Edit. 1527, by Winkin de Worde, 151. — "Than toke they *the precious body* and enoynted it with moche reverence; and when they had layd it in the erth, on the morowe they came to the sepulture and founde *the holy body* above the erth nygh unto the same sepulture, and than were they all abasshed and wyst not what to do." It seems, the knightes, who had brought him out of France, had promised that, if he died on his journey, he should be sent back and buried "where as they had taken him;" and therefore his body would not stay in the ground, till it was deposited, according to promise, in France, where it afterwards worked many miracles.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be like a wilde leon, fool-hardy.
I wote wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebour, and thanne go my way,
For I am perilous with knif in honde,
Al be it that I dare not hire withstonde:
For she is bigge in armes by my faith,
That shal he finde, that hire misdoth or saith.
But let us passe away fro this matere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be mery of chere,
For ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Lo, Rouchester stondeth here faste by.
Ride forth, min owen lord, breke not our game.
But by my trouthe I can not telle youre name;
Whether shal I call you my lord Dan John,
Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by your fader kin?
I vow to God, thou hast a ful faire skin;
It is a gentil pasture ther thou gost;
Thou art not like a penaunt[1] or a gost.
Upon my faith thou art som officer,
Som worthy sextein, or som celerer.[2]
For by my fadres soule, as to my dome,[3]
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at home;
No poure cloisterer, ne non novice,
But a governour bothe ware and wise,
And therwithal of braunes and of bones
A right wel faring persone for the nones.
I pray to God yeve him confusion,
That first thee brought into religion.
Thou woldest han ben a trede-foul[4] a right,
Haddest thou as grete leve, as thou hast might,
To parfourme all thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest begeten many a creature.
Alas! why werest thou so wide a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were pope,
Not only thou but every mighty man,
Though he were shore ful high upon his pan,
Shuld have a wif, for al this world is lorn;
Religion hath take up all the corn

[1] A person doing penance.
[2] The officer in a monastery who had the care of the provisions.
[3] In my opinion.
[4] *I. e.*, a cock.

Of treeing, and we lorel men ben shrimpen:
Of feble trees ther comen wrecched impes.
This maketh that our heires ben so sclendre
And feble, that they mown not wel engendre.
This maketh that our wives wel mowe
Religious folk, for they mown better powe
Of Venus payementes than mowen we:
God wote, no lussheburghes[1] payen ye.
But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
Ful oft in game a sothe have I herd say.
This worthy Monke toke all in patience,
And saide; I wol don all my diligence,
As fer as sowneth into honestee,
To tellen you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to herken hiderward,
I wol you seyn the lif of Seint Edward;
Or elles tragedies first I wol telle,
Of which I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to seyn a certain storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of him that stood in gret prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of high degree
In to miserie, and endeth wretchedly.
And they ben versified commonly
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron:[2]
In prose eke ben endited many on,
And eke in metre, in many a sondry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought ynough suffice.
Now herkeneth, if you liketh for to here.
But first I you beseche in this matere,
Though I by ordre telle not thise thinges,
Be it of popes, emperoures, or kinges,
After hir ages, as men written finde,
But telle hem som before and som behinde,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of min ignorance.

[1] Base coins, first imported, as Skinner thinks, from Luxemburg.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] It is true that the tragic Iambic verse is an Hexameter, as regards the number of its metres; but that term is usually applied to the heroic verse, composed of dactyls and spondees.

The Monkes Tale.

13997–14024.

I wol bewaile in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem, that stode in high degree,
And fellen so, that there n'as no remedie
To bring hem out of hire adversitee.
For certain whan that fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man of hire the cours withholde:
Let no man trust on blinde prosperitee;
Beth ware by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

LUCIFER.

At Lucifer, though he an angel were
And not a man, at him I wol beginne.
For though fortune may non angel dere,[1]
From high degree yet fell he for his sinne
Doun into helle, whereas he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of angels alle,
Now art thou Sathanas, that maist not twinne[2]
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

ADAM.

Lo Adam, in the feld of Damascene
With Goddes owen finger wrought was he,
And not begeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte[3] all Paradis saving o tree:
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, til he for misgovernance
Was driven out of his prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschance.

SAMPSON.

Lo Sampson, which that was annunciat
By the angel, long or his nativitee:
And was to God Almighty consecrat,
And stode in noblesse while he mighte see:

[1] Hurt. [2] Depart, turn. [3] Governed, ruled.

Was never swiche another as was he,
To speke of strength, and therto hardinesse:
But to his wives tolde he his secree,
Thurgh which he slow himself for wretchednesse.

Sampson, this noble and mighty champion,
Withouten wepen, save his handes twey,
He slow and all to-rente the leon,
Toward his wedding walking by the wey:
His false wif coude him so plese, and pray,
Til she his conseil knewe; and she untrewe
Unto his foos his conseil gan bewray,
And him forsoke, and toke another newe.

Three hundred foxes toke Sampson for ire,
And all hir tayles he togeder bond:
And set the foxes tayles all on fire,
For he in every tayl had knit a brond.
And they brent all the cornes in that lond,
And all hir oliveres, and vines eke.
A thousand men he slow eke with his hond,
And had no wepen, but an asses cheke.

Whan they were slain, so thursted him, that he
Was wel nie lorne, for which he gan to preye,
That God wold on his peine han som pitee,
And send him drinke, or elles moste he deye:
And of his asses cheke, that was so dreye,
Out of a wang[1] toth sprang anon a welle,
Of which he dranke ynough, shortly to seye.
Thus halp him God, as *Judicum*[2] can telle.

By veray force at Gasa on a night,
Maugre the Philistins of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath up plight,[3]
And on his bak ycaried hem hath he
High on an hill, wher as men might hem se.
O noble mighty Sampson, lefe and dere,
Haddest thou not told to women thy secree,
In all this world ne had ther ben thy pere.

This Sampson never sider drank ne wine,
Ne on his hed came rasour non ne shere,
By precept of the messager divine,
For all his strengthes in his heres were:

[1] Cheek. [2] *I. e.*, Judges. [3] Plucked

The Monkes Tale. P 6

And fully twenty winter yere by yere
He hadde of Israel the governance:
But sone shal he wepen many a tere,
For women shuln him bringen to meschance.

Unto his lemman Dalida he told,
That in his heres all his strengthe lay,
And falsely to his fomen she him sold;
And sleping in hire barme[1] upon a day
She made to clip or shere his here away,
And made his fomen all his craft espien;
And whan that they him fond in this array,
They bond him fast, and putten out his eyen.

But or his here was clipped or yshave,
Ther was no bond, with which men might him bind,
But now is he in prison in a cave,
Wheras they made him at the querne[2] grinde.
O noble Sampson, strongest of mankind,
O whilom juge in glory and richesse,
Now mayest thou wepen with thin eyen blind,
Sith thou fro wele art falle in wretchednesse.

The ende of this caitif was, as I shal seye:
His fomen made a feste upon a day,
And made him as hir fool before hem pleye:
And this was in a temple of gret array.
But at the last he made a foule affray,
For he two pillers shoke, and made hem falle,
And doun fell temple and all, and ther it lay,
And slow himself, and eke his fomen alle.

This is to sayn, the princes everich on,
And eke three thousand bodies wer ther slain
With falling of the gret temple of ston.
Of Sampson now wol I no more sain:
Beth ware by this ensample old and plain,
That no men tell hir conseil to hir wives
Of swiche thing, as they wold han secree fain,
If that it touch hir limmes or hir lives.

[1] Lap. [2] Mill.

HERCULES.

Of Hercules the soveraine conquerour
Singen his werkes laude, and high renoun;
For in his time of strength he was the flour.
He slow and raft the skinne of the leon;
He of Centaures laid the bost adoun;
He Harpies slow, the cruel briddes felle;
He golden apples raft fro the dragon;
He drow out Cerberus the hound of helle.

He slow the cruel tirant Busirus,
And made his hors to fret him flesh and bon;
He slow the firy serpent venemous;
Of Achelous two hornes brake he on.
And he slow Cacus in a cave of ston;
He slow the geaunt Anteus the strong;
He slow the grisely bore, and that anon;
And bare the hevene on his nekke long.

Was never wight sith that the world began,
That slow so many monstres, as did he;
Thurghout the wide world his name ran,
What for his strength, and for his high bountee;
And every reaume[1] went he for to see,
He was so strong that no man might him let;
At bothe the worldes endes, saith Trophee,[2]
In stede of boundes he a pillar set.

A lemman had this noble champion,
That highte Deianire, as fresh as May;
And as thise clerkes maken mention,
She hath him sent a sherte fresh and gay:
Alas! this sherte, alas and wala wa!
Evenimed was sotilly withalle,
That or that he had wered it half a day,
It made his flesh all from his bones falle.

[1] Kingdom.

[2] "It occurred to me that this reference might possibly be to the original of the *Troilus and Creseide*, which, according to Lydgate, was called *Trophe*. (See the n. on p. 389, l. 24, in page 514, ed. 4to.) But I cannot find any such passage, as is here quoted, in the *Filostrato*." —*Tyrwhitt*. I know not who can be the author alluded to.

But natheles som clerkes hire excusen
By on, that highte Nessus, that it maked;
Be as may be, I wol hire not accusen;
But on his bak this sherte he wered al naked,
Til that his flesh was for the venim blaked:[1]
And whan he saw non other remedie;
In hote coles he hath himselven raked,
For with no venime deigned him to die.

Thus starf[2] this worthy mighty Hercules.
Lo, who may trust on fortune any throw?[3]
For him that folweth all this world of pres,
Or he be ware, is oft ylaid ful lowe:
Ful wise is he, that can himselven knowe.
Beth ware, for whan that fortune list to glose,
Than waiteth she hire man to overthrowe
By swiche a way, as he wold lest suppose.

NABUCHODONOSOR.

The mighty trone, the precious tresor,
The glorious sceptre, and real majestee,
That hadde the king Nabuchodonosor,
With tonge unnethes[4] may descrived be.
He twies wan Jerusalem the citee,
The vessell of the temple he with him ladde;
At Babiloine was his soveraine see,
In which his glorie and his delit he hadde.

The fayrest children of the blood reall
Of Israel he did do gelde anon,
And maked eche of hem to ben his thral.[5]
Amonges other Daniel was on,
That was the wisest child of everich on:
For he the dremes of the king expouned,
Wher as in Caldee clerk was ther non,
That wiste to what fin[6] his dremes souned.

[1] Blackened.
[2] Died.
[3] Time.
[4] With difficulty.
[5] Servant, slave.
[6] End.

This proude king let make a statue of gold
Sixty cubites long, and seven in brede,
To which image bothe yonge and old
Commanded he to loute,[1] and have in drede,
Or in a fourneis, ful of flames rede,
He shuld be brent, that wolde not obeye:
But never wold assenten to that dede
Daniel, ne his yonge felawes tweye.

This king of kinges proud was and elat;
He wend that God, that sit in majestee,
Ne might him nat bereve of his estat:
But sodenly he lost his dignitee,
And like a best him semed for to be,
And ete hey as an oxe, and lay therout:
In rain with wilde bestes walked he,
Til certain time was ycome about.

And like an egles fethers wex his heres,
His neyles like a briddes clawes were,
Til God relesed him at certain yeres,
And yaf him wit, and than with many a tere
He thanked God, and ever his lif in fere
Was he to don amis, or more trespace:
And til that time he laid was on his bere,
He knew that God was ful of might and grace.

BALTHASAR.[2]

His sone, which that highte Balthasar,
That held the regne after his fadres day,
He by his fader coude not beware,
For proude he was of herte, and of array:
And eke an ydolaster was he ay.
His high estat assured him in pride;
But fortune cast him doun (and ther he lay)
And sodenly his regne gan devide.

A feste he made unto his lordes alle
Upon a time, and made hem blithe be,
And than his officeres gan he calle;
Goth, bringeth forth the vessels, quod he,

[1] Bow. [2] *I. e.* Belshazzar.

Which that my fader in his prosperitee
Out of the temple of Jerusalem beraft,
And to our highe goddes thanke we
Of honour, that our eldres with us last.

His wif, his lordes, and his concubines
Ay dronken, while hir appetites last,
Out of thise noble vessels sondry wines.
And on a wall this king his eyen cast,
And saw an hand armles, that wrote ful fast,
For fere of whiche he quoke, and siked sore.
This hand, that Balthasar so sore agast,
Wrote *Mane techel phares*, and no more.

In al that lond Magicien was non,
That coud expounen what this lettre ment,
But Daniel expouned it anon,
And said; O king, God to thy fader lent
Glorie and honour, regne, tresour, and rent;
And he was proud, and nothing God ne dradde;
And therfore God gret wreche upon him sent,
And him beraft the regne that he hadde.

He was out cast of mannes compagnie,
With asses was his habitation;
And ete hey, as a best, in wete and drie,
Til that he knew by grace and by reson,
That God of heven hath domination
Over every regne, and every creature:
And than had God of him compassion,
And him restored his regne and his figure.

Eke thou, that art his sone, art proud also,
And knowest all thise thinges verraily;
And art rebel to God, and art his fo.
Thou dranke eke of his vessels boldely,
Thy wif eke, and thy wenches sinfully
Dranke of the same vessels sondry wines,
And heried[1] false goddes cursedly,
Therfore to thee yshapen ful gret pine is.

This hand was sent fro God, that on the wall
Wrote *Mane techel phares*, trusteth me;
Thy regne is don, thou weyest nought at all;
Divided is thy regne, and it shal be

[1] Praised.

To Medes and to Perses yeven, quod he.
And thilke same night this king was slawe;
And Darius occupied his degree,
Though he therto had neither right ne lawe.

Lordinges, ensample hereby moun ye take,
How that in lordship is no sikernesse:[1]
For whan that fortune wol a man forsake,
She bereth away his regne and his richesse,
And eke his frendes, bothe more and lesse.
For what man that hath frendes thurgh fortune,
Mishap wol make hem enemies, I gesse.
This proverbe is ful soth, and ful commune.

ZENOBIA.

Zenobia, of Palmerie the quene,
(As writen Persiens of hire noblesse)
So worthy was in armes, and so kene,
That no wight passed hire in hardinesse,
Ne in linage, ne in other gentillesse.
Of kinges blood of Perse is she descended;
I say not that she hadde most fairenesse,
But of hire shape she might not ben amended.

From hire childhode I finde that she fledde
Office of woman, and to wode she went;
And many a wilde hartes blood she shedde
With arwes brode that she to hem sent;
She was so swift, that she anon hem hent.
And whan that she was elder, she wold kille
Leons, lepards, and beres al to-rent,
And in hire armes weld hem at hire wille.

She dorst the wilde bestes dennes seke,
And rennen[2] in the mountaignes all the night,
And slepe under the bush; and she coud eke
Wrastlen by veray force and veray might
With any yong man, were he never so wight;
Ther mighte nothing in hire armes stonde;
She kept hire maidenhode from every wight,
To no man deigned hire for to be bonde.

[1] Security. [2] Run about.

But at the last hire frendes han hire maried
To Odenate, a prince of that contree;
Al were it so, that she hem longe taried.
And ye shul understonden, how that he
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she;
But natheles, whan they were knit in fere,
They lived in joye, and in felicitee,
For eche of hem had other lefe and dere.

Save o thing, that she n'olde never assente,
By no way, that he shulde by hire lie
But ones, for it was hire plaine entente
To have a childe, the world to multiplie:
And al so sone as that she might espie,
That she was not with childe with that dede,
Than would she suffer him don his fantasie
Eftsone,[1] and not but ones out of drede.

And if she were with child at thilke cast,
No more shuld he playen thilke game
Till fully fourty dayes weren past:
Than wold she ones suffre him do the same.
Al were this Odenate wild or tame,
He gate no more of hire, for thus she sayde,
It was to wives lecherie and shame,
In other cas if that men with hem playde.

Two sones by this Odenate had she,
The which she kept in vertue and lettrure.
But now unto our tale turne we:
I say, so worshipful a creature,
And wise therwith, and large with mesure,
So penible in the werre, and curteis eke,
Ne more labour might in werre endure,
Was non, though al this world men shulden seke.

Hire riche array ne might not be told,
As wel in vessell as in hire clothing:
She was al clad in pierrie[2] and in gold,
And eke she lefte not for non hunting
To have oí sondry tonges ful knowing,
Whan that she leiser had, and for to entend
To lernen bookes was all hire liking,
How she in vertue might hire lif dispend.

[1] Again. [2] Jewels, precious stones.

And shortly of this storie for to trete,
So doughty was hire husbond and eke she,
That they conquered many regnes grete
In the Orient, with many a faire citee,
Appertenaunt unto the majestee
Of Rome, and with strong hand held hem ful fast,
Ne never might hir fomen don hem flee,
Ay while that Odenates dayes last.

Hire batailles, who so list hem for to rede,
Againe Sapor the king, and other mo,
And how that all this processe fell in dede,
Why she conquered, and what title therto,
And after of hire mischefe and hire wo,
How that she was beseged, and ytake,
Let him unto my maister Petrark go,
That writeth ynough of this, I undertake.

Whan Odenate was ded, she mightily
The regnes held, and with hire propre hond
Agains hire fos she fought so cruelly,
That ther n'as king ne prince in all that lond,
That he n'as glad, if he that grace fond
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye:
With hire they maden alliaunce by bond
To ben in pees, and let hire ride and pleye.

The emperour of Rome Claudius,
Ne, him beforn, the Romain Galien
Ne dorste never be so corageous,
Ne non Ermin, ne non Egiptien,
Ne Surrien, ne non Arabien
Within the feld ne dorste with hire fight,
Lest that she wold hem with hire hondes slen,
Or with hire meinie putten hem to flight.

In kinges habite wente hire sones two,
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,
And Heremanno and Timolao
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.
But ay fortune hath in hire hony galle:
This mighty quene may no while endure,
Fortune out of hire regne made hire falle
To wretchednesse, and to misaventure.

Aurelian, whan that the governance
Of Rome came into his hondes twey,
He shope upon this quene to do vengeance,
And with his legions he toke his way
Toward Zenobie, and shortly for to say,
He made hire flee, and atte last hire hent,
And fettred hire, and eke hire children tway,
And wan the lond, and home to Rome he went.

Amonges other thinges that he wan,
Hire char, that was with gold wrought and pierrie,
This grete Romain, this Aurelian
Hath with him lad, for that men shuld it see.
Beforen his triumphe walketh she
With gilte chaines on hire necke honging,
Crouned she was, as after hire degree,
And ful of pierrie charged hire clothing.

Alas fortune! she that whilom was
Dredeful to kinges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth[1] all the peple on hire, alas!
And she that helmed was in starke stoures,[2]
And wan by force tounes stronge and toures,
Shal on hire hed now were a vitremite;[3]
And she that bare the sceptre ful of floures,
Shal bere a distaf hire cost for to quite.

NERO.

Although that Nero were as vicious,
As any fend, that lith ful low adoun,
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,
This wide world had in subjectioun,
Both Est and West, South and Septentrioun.[4]
Of rubies, saphires, and of perles white
Were all his clothes brouded up and doun,
For he in gemmes gretly gan delite.

More delicat, more pompous of array,
More proude, was never emperour than he;
That ilke cloth that he had wered o day,
After that time he n'olde it never see;

[1] Gazeth. [2] Battles.
[3] What this means Tyrwhitt cannot tell. [4] North.

Nettes of gold threde had he gret plentee,
To fish in Tiber, whan him list to play;
His lustes were as law, in his degree,
For fortune as his frend wold him obay.

He Rome brente for his delicacie;
The senatours he slow upon a day,
To heren how that men wold wepe and crie;
And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.
His moder made he in pitous array,
For he hire wombe let slitten, to behold
Wher he conceived was, so wala wa!
That he so litel of his moder told.

No tere out of his eyen for that sight
Ne came, but sayd, a faire woman was she.
Gret wonder is, how that he coud or might
Be domesman[1] of hire dede beautee:
The wine to bringen him commanded he,
And dranke anon, non other wo he made.
Whan might is joined unto crueltee,
Alas! to depe wol the venime wade.

In yonthe a maister had this emperour
To techen him lettrure and curtesie,
For of moralitee he was the flour,
As in his time, but if bookes lie.
And while this maister had of him maistrie,
He maked him so conning and so souple,
That longe time it was, or tyrannie,
Or any vice dorst in him uncouple.

This Seneka, of which that I devise,
Because Nero had of him swiche drede,
For he fro vices wold him ay chastise
Discretly, as by word, and not by dede,
Sire, he wold say, an emperour mote nede
Be vertuous, and haten tyrannie.
For which he made him in a bathe to blede
On[2] bothe his armes, till he muste die.

This Nero had eke of a custumaunce
In youth ageins his maister for to rise;
Which afterward him thought a gret grevaunce,
Therfore he made him dien in this wise.

[1] Judge. [2] From.

But natheles this Seneka the wise
Chees in a bathe to die in this manere,
Rather than han another turmentise:
And thus hath Nero slain his maister dere.

Now fell it so, that fortune list no lenger
The highe pride of Nero to cherice:
For though that he were strong, yet was she strenger.
She thoughte thus; by God I am to nice
To set a man, that is fulfilled of vice,
In high degree, and emperour him calle
By God out of his sete I wol him trice,[1]
Whan he lest weneth, sonest shal he falle.

The peple rose upon him on a night
For his defaute, and whan he it espied,
Out of his dores anon he hath him dight
Alone, and ther he wend han ben allied,
He knocked fast, and ay the more he cried,
The faster shetten they hir dores alle:
Tho wist he wel he had himself misgied,[2]
And went his way, no lenger dorst he calle.

The peple cried and rombled up and doun,
That with his eres herd he how they sayde,
Wher is this false tyrant, this Neroun?
For fere almost out of his wit he brayde,
And to his goddes pitously he preide
For socour, but it mighte not betide:
For drede of this him thoughte that he deide,
And ran into a gardin him to hide.

And in this gardin fond he cherles tweye
That saten by a fire gret and red,
And to thise cherles two he gan to preye
To slen him, and to girden of his hed,
That to his body, whan that he were ded,
Were no despit ydon for his defame.
Himself he slow, he coud no better rede,
Of which fortune lough[3] and hadde a game.

[1] Thrust. [2] Misguided. [3] Laughed.

HOLOFERNES.

Was never capitaine under a king,
That regnes mo put in subjectioun,
Ne strenger was in feld of alle thing
As in his time, ne greter of renoun,
Ne more pompous in high presumptioun,
Than Holoferne, which that fortune ay kist
So likerously, and lad him up and doun,
Til that his hed was of, or that he wist.

Not only that this world had him in awe
For lesing of richesse and libertee;
But he made every man reneie[1] his lawe.
Nabuchodonosor was God, sayd he;
Non other God ne shulde honoured be.
Ageins his heste ther dare no wight trespace,
Save in Bethulia, a strong citee,
Wher Eliachim a preest was of that place.

But take kepe of the deth of Holoferne:
Amid his host he dronken lay a night
Within his tente, large as is a berne;
And yet for all his pompe and all his might,
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright
Sleping, his hed of smote, and fro his tente
Ful prively she stale from every wight,
And with his hed unto hire toun she wente.

ANTIOCHUS.

What nedeth it of king Antiochus
To tell his high and real[2] majestee,
His gret pride, and his werkes venimous?
For swiche another was ther non as he;
Redeth what that he was in Machabe.
And redeth the proud wordes that he seid,
And why he fell from his prosperitee,
And in an hill how wretchedly he deid.

[1] Renounce. [2] Royal.

Fortune him had enhaunsed so in pride
That verily he wend he might attaine
Unto the sterres upon every side,
And in a balaunce weyen eche mountaine,
And all the floodes of the see restreine:
And Goddes peple had he most in hate,
Hem wold he sleen in turment and in peine,
Wening that God ne might his pride abate.

And for that Nichanor and Timothee
With Jewes were venquished mightily,
Unto the Jewes swiche an hate had he,
That he bad greithe his char[1] ful hastily,
And swore and sayde ful despitously,
Unto Jerusalem he wold eftsone
To wreke his ire on it ful cruelly,
But of his purpos was he let ful sone.

God for his manace him so sore smote,
With invisible wound, ay incurable,
That in his guttes carfe it so and bote,[2]
Til thatte his peines weren importable;
And certainly the wreche[3] was resonable,
For many a mannes guttes did he peine;
But from his purpos, cursed and damnable,
For all his smerte, he n'olde him not restreine:

But bade anon apparailen his host.
And sodenly, or he was of it ware,
God daunted all his pride, and all his bost;
For he so sore fell out of his chare,
That it his limmes and his skinne to-tare,
So that he neither mighte go ne ride;
But in a chaiere men about him bare,
Alle forbrused bothe bak and side.

The wreche of God him smote so cruelly,
That thurgh his body wicked wormes crept,
And therwithal he stanke so horribly,
That non of all his meinie that him kept,
Whether so that he woke or elles he slept,
Ne mighte not of him the stinke endure.
In this mischiefe he wailed and eke wept,
And knew God, Lord of every creature.

[1] Make ready his chariot.
[2] It tore and bit. [3] Revenge.

To all his host, and to himself also
Ful wlatsom[1] was the stinke of his careine;
No man ne mighte him beren to ne fro.
And in this stinke, and this horrible peine,
He starf[2] ful wretchedly in a mountaine.
Thus hath this robbour, and this homicide,
That many a man made to wepe and pleine,
Swiche guerdon, as belongeth unto pride.

ALEXANDER.

The storie of Alexandre is so commune,
That every wight, that hath discretioun,
Hath herd somwhat or all of his fortune.
This wide world, as in conclusioun,
He wan by strength, or for his high renoun
They weren glad for pees unto him sende.
The pride of man and bost he layd adoun,
Wher so he came, unto the worldes ende.

Comparison might never yet be maked
Betwix him and another conquerour,
For al this world for drede of him hath quaked;
He was of knighthode and of fredome flour;
Fortune him maked the heir of hire honour.
Save wine and women, nothing might asswage
His high entente in armes and labour,
So was he ful of leonin corage.

What pris were it to him, though I you told
Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo,
Of kinges, princes, dukes, erles bold,
Which he conquered, and brought hem into wo?
I say, as fer as man may ride or go
The world was his, what shuld I more devise?
For though I wrote or told you ever mo
Of his knighthode, it mighte not suffice.

Twelf yere he regned, as saith Machabe;
Philippus sone of Macedoine he was,
That first was king in Grece the contree.
O worthy gentil Alexandre, alas

[1] Loathsome. [2] Died.

That ever shuld thee fallen swiche a cas!
Enpoisoned of thyn owen folke thou were;
Thy sis[1] fortune hath turned into an as,
And yet for thee ne wept she never a tere.

Who shal me yeven teres to complaine
The deth of gentillesse, and of fraunchise,[2]
That all this world welded in his demaine,
And yet him thought it mighte not suffice?
So ful was his corage of high emprise.
Alas! who shal me helpen to endite
False fortune, and poison to despise?
The whiche two of all this wo I wite.

JULIUS CESAR.

By wisdome, manhode, and by gret labour,
From humblehede to real majestee
Up rose he Julius the conquerour,
That wan all the occident, by lond and see,
By strengthe of hond, or elles by tretee,
And unto Rome made hem tributarie;
And sith[3] of Rome the emperour was he,
Til that fortune wexe his adversarie.

O mighty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Ageins Pompeius father thin in lawe,
That of the orient had all the chivalrie,
As fer as that the day beginneth dawe,
Thou thurgh thy knighthode hast hem take and slawe,
Save fewe folk, that with Pompeius fledde,
Thurgh which thou put all the orient in awe,
Thanke fortune, that so wel thee spedde.

But now a litel while I wol bewaile
This Pompeius, this noble governour
Of Rome, which that fled at this bataille.
I say, on of his men, a false traitour,
His hed of smote, to winnen him favour
Of Julius, and him the hed he brought:
Alas, Pompeie, of the orient conquerour,
That fortune unto swiche a fin thee brought!

[1] *I. e.*, thy cast of six, the highest throw at dice, has been turned into the *as*, the lowest. [2] Frankness. [3] Some time.

To Rome again repaireth Julius
With his triumphe laureat ful hie,
But on a time Brutus and Cassius,
That ever had of his high estat envie,
Ful prively had made conspiracie
Ageins this Julius in sotil wise:
And cast the place, in which he shulde die
With bodekins, as I shal you devise.

This Julius to the capitolie wente
Upon a day, as he was wont to gon,
And in the capitolie anon him hente
This false Brutus, and his other foon,
And stiked him with bodekins anon
With many a wound, and thus they let him
But never gront[1] he at no stroke but on,
Or elles at two, but if his storie lie.

So manly was this Julius of herte,
And so wel loved estatly honestee,
That though his dedly woundes sore smerte,
His mantel over his hippes caste he,
For no man shulde seen his privetee:
And as he lay of dying in a trance,
And wiste verily that ded was he,
Of honestee yet had he remembrance.

Lucan, to thee this storie I recommende,
And to Sueton, and Valerie also,
That of this storie writen word and ende:
How that to thise gret conqueroures two
Fortune was first a frend, and sith a fo.
No man ne trust upon hire favour long,
But have hire in await for evermo;
Witnesse on all thise conqueroures strong.

CRESUS.

The riche Cresus, whilom king of Lide,
Of whiche Cresus, Cirus sore him dradde,
Yet was he caught amiddes all his pride,
And to be brent men to the fire him ladde:
But swiche a rain doun from the welken shadde,
That slow[2] the fire, and made to him escape
But to beware no grace yet he hadde,
Til fortune on the galwes made him gape.

[1] Groaned. [2] Slew, put out.

Whan he escaped was, he can not stint
For to beginne a newe werre again:
He wened wel, for that fortune him sent
Swiche hap, that he escaped thurgh the rain,
That of his foos he mighte not be slain;
And eke a sweven[1] upon a night he mette,
Of which he was so proud, and eke so fain,
That in vengeance he all his herte sette.

Upon a tree he was, as that him thought,
Ther Jupiter him wesshe, both bak and side;
And Phebus eke a faire towail him brought
To drie him with, and therfore wex his pride.
And to his doughter that stood him beside,
Which that he knew in high science habound,
He bad hire tell him what it signified,
And she his dreme began right thus expound.

The tree (quod she) the galwes is to mene,
And Jupiter betokeneth snow and rain,
And Phebus with his towail clere and clene,
Tho ben the sonnes stremes, soth to sain:
Thou shalt anhanged be, fader, certain;
Rain shal thee wash, and sonne shal thee drie.
Thus warned him ful plat and eke ful plain
His doughter, which that called was Phanie.

Anhanged was Cresus the proude king,
His real trone might him not availle:
Tragedie is non other maner thing,
Ne can in singing crien ne bewaile,
But for that fortune all day wol assaille
With unware[2] stroke the regnes that ben proude:
For whan men trusten hire, than wol she faille,
And cover hire bright face with a cloude.

PETER OF SPAINE.

O noble, o worthy Petro, glorie of Spaine,
Whom fortune held so high in majestee,
Wel oughten men thy pitous deth complaine.
Out of thy lond thy brother made thee flee,
And after at a sege by sotiltee
Thou were betraied, and lad unto his tent,
Wher as he with his owen hond slow thee,
Succeeding in thy regne and in thy rent.

[1] Dream. [2] Unexpected.

The feld of snow, with th'egle of blak therin,
Caught with the limerod,[1] coloured as the glede,
He brewed this cursednesse, and all this sinne;
The wicked neste was werker of this dede;
Not Charles Oliver,[2] that toke ay hede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike
Genilon Oliver, corrupt for mede,
Broughte this worthy king in swiche a brike.[3]

PETRO, KING OF CYPRE.[4]

O worthy Petro king of Cypre also,
That Alexandrie wan by high maistrie,
Ful many an hethen wroughtest thou ful wo,
Of which thin owen lieges had envie:
And for no thing but for thy chivalrie,
They in thy bed han slain thee by the morwe;
Thus can fortune hire whele governe and gie,
And out of joye bringen men to sorwe.

BARNABO VISCOUNT.[5]

Of Milane grete Barnabo Viscount,
God of delit, and scourge of Lumbardie,
Why shuld I not thin infortune account,
Sith in estat thou clomben were so high?

[1] A twig charged with birdlime.

[2] Not the Oliver of Charles (Charlemagne), but an Oliver of Armorica, a second Genelon, or Ganelon. See ver. 13124, 15233. So this passage is to be understood, which in Ed. Urr. has been changed to—Not Charles, *ne* Oliver.—But who this *Oliver of Bretagne* was, whom our author charges as *werker* of the death of King Petro, is not so clear. According to Mariana, L. xvii. c. 13, such a charge might most properly be brought against *Bertrand* du Guesclin, a Breton, afterwards Constable of France; as it was in consequence of a private treaty with him, that Petro came to his tent, where he was killed by his brother Henry, and partly, as some said, *con ayuda de Beltran*. But how he should come to be called *Oliver* I cannot guess; unless, perhaps, Chaucer confounded him with *Olivier de Clisson*, another famous Breton of those times, who was also Constable of France after Bertrand. Froissart mentions an *Olivier de Manny*, nephew to Bertrand du Guesclin, as receiving large rewards from King Henry; vol. i. ch. 245. but he does not represent him as particularly concerned in the death of Petro.—*Tyrwhitt*.

[3] Breach, ruin.

[4] Concerning the taking of Alexandria by this prince, and his other exploits, see the note on ver. 51, and the authors there cited. He was assassinated in 1369. Acad. des Ins. T. xx. p. 439.—*Tyrwhitt*.

[5] Bernabo Visconti, Duke of Milan, was deposed by his nephew, and thrown into prison, where he died in 1355.—*Tyrwhitt*.

Thy brothers sone, that was thy double allie,
For he thy nevew was, and sone in lawe,
Within his prison made he thee to die,
But why, ne how, n'ot I that thou were slawe.

HUGELIN OF PISE.[1]

Of the erl Hugelin of Pise the langour[2]
Ther may no tonge tellen for pitee.
But litel out of Pise stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prison yput was he,
And with him ben his litel children three,
The eldest scarsely five yere was of age:
Alas! fortune, it was gret crueltee
Swiche briddes for to put in swiche a cage.

Dampned was he to die in that prison,
For Roger, which that bishop was of Pise,
Had on him made a false suggestion,
Thurgh which the peple gan upon him rise,
And put him in prison, in swiche a wise,
As ye han herd; and mete and drinke he had
So smale, that wel unnethe it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful poure and bad.

And on a day befell, that in that houre,
Whan that his mete wont was to be brought,
The gailer shette the dores of the toure;
He hered it wel, but he spake right nought.
And in his herte anon ther fell a thought,
That they for hunger wolden do him dien;
Alas! quod he, alas that I was wrought!
Therwith the teres fellen fro his eyen

His yonge sone, that three yere was of age,
Unto him said, fader, why do ye wepe?
Whan will the gailer bringen our potage?
Is ther no morsel bred that ye do kepe?
I am so hungry, that I may not slepe.
Now wolde God that I might slepen ever,
Than shuld not hunger in my wombe[3] crepe;
Ther n'is no thing, sauf bred, that me were lever.

[1] Chaucer himself has referred us to Dante for the original of this tragedy. See *Inferno*, c. xxxiii.—*Tyrwhitt*. Compare Buckley's *Great Cities of the Middle Ages*, art. Pisa, p. 193 sqq.

[2] *I. e.*, the slow death by starvation.

[3] Belly.

Thus day by day this childe began to crie,
Til in his fadres barme adoun it lay,
And saide; farewel, fader, I mote die;
And kist his fader, and dide the same day.
And whan the woful fader did it sey,
For wo his armes two he gan to bite,
And saide, alas! fortune, and wala wa!
Thy false whele my wo all may I wite.

His children wenden, that for hunger it was
That he his armes gnowe,[1] and not for wo,
And sayden: fader, do not so, alas!
But rather ete the flesh upon us two.
Our flesh thou yaf us, take our flesh us fro,
And ete ynough: right thus they to him seide,
And after that, within a day or two,
They laide hem in his lappe adoun, and deide.

Himself dispeired eke for hunger starf.
Thus ended is this mighty Erl of Pise:
From high estat fortune away him carf.
Of this tragedie it ought ynough suffice;
Who so wol here it in a longer wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Itaille,
That highte Dante, for he can it devise
Fro point to point, not o word wol he faille.

[1] Gnawed.

THE NONNES PREESTES PROLOGUE.

14773—14804.

Ho! quod the knight, good sire, no more of this:
That ye han said, it right ynough ywis,[1]
And mochel more; for litel hevinesse
Is right ynough to mochel folk, I gesse.
I say for me, it is a gret disese,
Wher as men have ben in gret welth and ese,
To heren of hir soden fall, alas!
And the contrary is joye and gret solas,
As whan a man hath ben in poure estat,
And climbeth up, and wexeth fortunat,
And ther abideth in prosperitee:
Swiche thing is gladsom, as it thinketh me,
And of swiche thing were goodly for to telle.
Ye, quod our hoste, by Seint Poules belle,
Ye say right soth; this monk hath clapped loude:
He spake, how fortune covered with a cloude
I wote not what, and als[2] of a tragedie
Right now ye herd: and parde no remedie
It is for to bewailen, ne complaine
That that is don, and als it is a paine,
As ye han said, to here of hevinesse.
Sire monk, no more of this, so God you blesse;
Your tale anoyeth all this compagnie;
Swiche talking is not worth a boterflie,
For therin is ther no disport ne game:
Therfore, sire monk, dan Piers by your name,
I pray you hertely, tell us somwhat elles,
For sikerly, n'ere[3] clinking of your belles,
That on your bridel hange on every side,
By heven king, that for us alle dide,
I shuld er this have fallen doun for slepe,
Although the slough had ben never so depe:

[1] Truly, certainly. [2] Moreover, also.
[3] But for the.

Than hadde your tale all ben tolde in vain.
For certainly, as that thise clerkes sain,
Wher as a man may have non audience,
Nought helpeth it to tellen his sentence.
And wel I wote the substance is in me,
If any thing shal wel reported be.
Sire, say somwhat of hunting,[1] I you pray.
Nay, quod this Monk, I have no lust to play:
Now let another telle as I have told.
Than spake our hoste with rude speche and bold,
And sayd unto the Nonnes Preest anon,
Come nere, thou preest, come hither, thou Sire John.[2]
Telle us swiche thing, as may our hertes glade.
Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.
What though thyn horse be bothe foule and lene,
If he wol serve thee, recke thee not a bene:
Loke that thyn herte be mery evermo.
Yes, hoste, quod he, so mote I ride or go,
But I be mery, ywis I wol be blamed.
And right anon his tale he hath attamed;[3]
And thus he said unto us everich on,
This swete preest, this goodly man Sire John.

The Nonnes Preestes Tale.

A POURE widewe somdel stoupen in age,
Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
Beside a grove, stonding in a dale.
This widewe, which I tell you of my tale,
Sin thilke day that she was last a wif
In patience led a ful simple lif.

[1] For the propriety of this request, see the note on ver. 166 of the Monkes Character.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] I know not how it has happened, that in the principal modern languages, John, or its equivalent, is a name of contempt, or at least of slight. So the Italians use *Gianni* from whence *Zani;* the Spaniards *Juan*, as *Bobo Juan*, a foolish John; the French *Jean*, with various additions; and in English, when we call a man *a John*, we do not mean it as a title of honour. Chaucer in ver. 3708, uses *Jacke fool*, as the Spaniards do *Bobo Juan*, and I suppose *Jack ass* has the same etymology.

The title of *Sire* was usually given, by courtesy, to priests, both secular and regular.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] Opened, began.

For litel was hire catel and hire rente:
By husbondry of swiche as God hire sente,
She found hireself, and eke hire doughtren two.
Three large sowes had she, and no mo:
Three kine, and eke a sheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hire boure, and eke hire halle,
In which she ete many a slender mele.
Of poinant sauce ne knew she never a dele.
No deintee morsel passed thurgh hire throte;
Hire diete was accordant to hire cote.
Repletion ne made hire never sike;
Attempre diete was all hire physike,
And exercise, and hertes suffisance.
The goute let[1] hire nothing for to dance,
No apoplexie shente[2] not hire hed.
No win ne dranke she, neyther white ne red:
Hire bord was served most with white and black,
Milk and broun bred, in which she fond no lack,
Seinde[3] bacon, and somtime an ey[4] or twey;
For she was as it were a maner dey.[5]
A yerd she had, enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drie diche without,
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,
In all the land of crowing n'as his pere.
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse daies that in the chirches gon.
Wel sikerer[6] was his crowing in his loge,
Than is a clok, or any abbey orloge.[7]
By nature he knew eche ascentioun
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Than crew he, that it might not ben amended.

[1] Hindered.
[2] Injured.
[3] Singed, frizzled.
[4] Egg.
[5] *A kind of dey:* but what *a dey* was it is not easy to determine precisely. It is mentioned, as the last species of labourers in husbandry, in the Stat. 25 Edw. III. St. 1. c. 1. Qe chescun charetter, caruer, chaceour des carues, bercher, porcher, *deye*, & tous autres servantz.—And again in the Stat. 37 Edw. III. c. 14. Item qe charetters, charuers, chaceours des carues, bovers, vachers, berchers, porchers, *deyes*, & tous autres gardeins des bestes, bateurs des bleez, & toutes maneres des genz *d'estate de garson* entendantz a husbandrie.—It probably meant originally *a day-labourer* in general, though it may since have been used to denote particularly the superintendent of a *Dayerie*. See Du Cange in v. DAERIA. DAYERIA. DAGASCALCI.—*Tyrwhitt.*
[6] Surer, more regular.
[7] Clock, dial.

His combe was redder than the fin corall,
Enbattelled, as it were a castel wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like asure were his legges and his tone;[1]
His nailes whiter than the lily flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok had in his governance
Seven hennes, for to don all his plesance,
Which were his susters and his paramoures,
And wonder like to him, as of coloures.
Of which the fairest hewed in the throte,
Was cleped faire damoselle Pertelote.[2]
Curteis she was, discrete, and debonaire,
And compenable, and bare hireself so faire,
Sithen the day that she was sevennight old,
That trewelich she hath the herte in hold
Of Chaunteclere, loken[3] in every lith:[4]
He loved hire so, that wel was him therwith.
But swiche a joye it was to here hem sing,
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to spring,
In swete accord: my lefe is fare in lond.
For thilke time, as I have understond,
Bestes and briddes couden speke and sing,
And so befell, that in a dawening,
As Chaunteclere among his wives alle
Sate on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next him sate his faire Pertelote,
This Chaunteclere gan gronen in his throte,
As man that in his dreme is dretched[5] sore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herd him rore,
She was agast, and saide, herte dere,
What aileth you to grone in this manere?
Ye ben a veray sleper, fy for shame.
And he answered and sayde thus; madame,
I pray you, that ye take it not agrefe:
By God me mette I was in swiche mischefe
Right now, that yet min herte is sore afright.
Now God (quod he) my sweven recche aright,[6]
And kepe my body out of foule prisoun.
Me mette, how that I romed up and doun

[1] Toes. [2] Like our "Dame Partlet."
[3] Locked, tightly fastened. [4] Limb.
[5] Troubled. [6] Make my dream have a good issue.

Within our yerde, wher as I saw a beste,
Was like an hound, and wold han made areste
Upon my body, and han had me ded.
His colour was betwix yelwe and red;
And tipped was his tail, and both his eres
With black, unlike the remenant of his heres.[1]
His snout was smal, with glowing eyen twey:
Yet for his loke almost for fere I dey:
This caused me my groning douteles.
Avoy, quod she, fy on you herteles.[2]
Alas! quod she, for by that God above
Now han ye lost myn herte and all my love;
I cannot love a coward by my faith.
For certes, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mighte be,
To have an husbond, hardy, wise and free,
And secree, and non niggard ne no fool,
Ne him that is agast of every tool,
Ne non avantour[3] by that God above.
How dorsten ye for shame say to your love,
That any thing might maken you aferde?
Han ye no mannes herte, and han a berde?
Alas! and con ye ben agast of swevenis?[4]
Nothing but vanitee, god wote, in sweven is.
Swevenes[5] engendren of repletions,
And oft of fume, and of complexions,
Whan humours ben to habundant in a wight.
Certes this dreme, which ye han met to-night,
Cometh of the grete superfluitee
Of youre rede *colera* parde,
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
Of arwes, and of fire with rede lemes,[6]
Of rede bestes, that they wol hem bite,
Of conteke,[7] and of waspes gret and lite;
Right as the humour of melancolie
Causeth ful many a man in slepe to crie,
For fere of bolles, and of beres blake,[8]
Or elles that blake devils wol hem take.
Of other humours coud I telle also,
That werken many a man in slepe moch wo:

[1] Hairs.
[2] Faintheartedness.
[3] Boaster.
[4] Dreaming.
[5] Dreams.
[6] Flames.
[7] Contention.
[8] Bulls, and black bears.

But I wol passe, as lightly as I can.
Lo Caton, which that was so wise a man,
Said he not thus? Ne do no force[1] of dremes.
Now, Sire, quod she, whan we flee fro the bemes,[2]
For Goddes love, as take som laxatif:
Up peril of my soule, and of my lif,
I conseil you the best, I wol not lie,
That both of coler, and of melancolie
Ye purge you; and for ye shul not tarie,
Though in this toun be non apotecarie,
I shal myself two herbes techen you,
That shal be for your hele, and for your prow;
And in our yerde, the herbes shall I finde,
The which han of hir propretee by kinde
To purgen you benethe, and eke above.
Sire, forgete not this for Goddes love;
Ye ben ful colerike of complexion;
Ware that the sonne in his ascention
Ne finde you not replete of humours hote:
And if it do, I dare wel lay a grote,
That ye shul han a fever tertiane,
Or elles an ague, that may be your bane.
A day or two ye shul han digestives
Of wormes, or ye take your laxatives,
Of laureole, centaurie, and fumetere,
Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,
Of catapuce,[3] or of gaitre-beries,[4]
Or herbe ive growing in our yerd, that mery[5] is:
Picke hem right as they grow, and ete hem in.
Beth mery, husbond, for your fader kin;
Dredeth no dreme; I can say you no more.
Madame, quod he, *grand mercy* of your lore.
But natheles, as touching dan Caton,
That hath of wisdome swiche a gret renoun,
Though that he bade no dremes for to drede,
By God, men moun in olde bookes rede,
Of many a man, more of auctoritee
Than ever Caton was, so mote I thee,[7]
That all the revers[8] sayn of his sentence,
And han wel founden by experience,

[1] Have no care. [2] The perches. [3] A species of spurge.
[4] Berries of the dog-wood tree. [5] Pleasant.
[6] Advice. [7] So may I thrive. [8] The contrary, reverse.

The Nonnes Preestes Tale. P.

That dremes ben significations
As wel of joye as tribulations,
That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this non argument;
The verey preve sheweth it indede.
  On of the gretest auctours[1] that men rede,
Saith thus; that whilom twey felawes wente
On pilgrimage in a ful good entente;
And happed so, they came into a toun,
Wher ther was swiche a congregatioun
Of peple, and eke so streit of herbergage,
That they ne founde as moche as a cotage,
In which they bothe might ylogged be:
Wherfore they musten of necessitee,
As for that night, departen compagnie;
And eche of hem goth to his hostelrie,
And toke his logging as it wolde falle.
  That on of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough,
That other man was logged wel ynough,
As was his aventure, or his fortune,
That us governeth all, as in commune.
  And so befell, that, long or it were day,
This man met in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felaw gan upon him calle,
And said, alas! for in an oxes stalle
This night shal I be mordred, ther I lie.
Now helpe me, dere brother, or I die;
In alle haste come to me, he saide.
  This man out of his slepe for fere abraide;[2]
But whan that he was waked of his slepe,
He turned him, and toke of this no kepe;
Him thought his dreme was but a vanitee.
Thus twies in his sleping dremed he.
  And at the thridde time yet his felaw
Came, as him thought, and said, I now am slaw:
Behold my blody woundes, depe and wide.
Arise up erly, in the morwe tide,

[1] Authors. Cicero, *de Divin.* L. i. c. 27, relates this and the following story; but in a contrary order; and with so many other differences, that one might be led to suspect that he was here quoted at second hand, if it were not usual with Chaucer, in these stories of familiar life, to throw in a number of natural circumstances, not to be found in his original authors.—*Tyrwhitt*

[2] Awoke.

[illegible]

Murdre wol out, this is my conclusioun.
And right anon, the ministres of the toun

[illegible]

[1] Loathsome. [2] Hidden.

Han hent the carter, and so sore him pined,
And eke the hosteler so sore engined,
That they beknew[1] hir wickednesse anon,
And were anhanged by the necke bon.
Here moun ye see that dremes ben to drede.
And certes in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chapitre after this,
(I gabbe not, so have I joye and blis)
Two men that wold han passed over the see
For certain cause in to a fer contree,
If that the wind ne hadde ben contrarie,
That made hem in a citee for to tarie,
That stood ful mery upon an haven side.
But on a day, agein the even tide,
The wind gan change, and blew right as hem lest.
Jolif and glad they wenten to hir rest,
And casten hem ful erly for to saile;
But to that o man fell a gret mervaile.
That on of hem in sleping as he lay,
He mette a wonder[2] dreme, again the day:
Him thought a man stood by his beddes side,
And him commanded, that he shuld abide,
And said him thus; if thou to-morwe wende,
Thou shalt be dreint;[3] my tale is at an ende.
He woke, and told his felaw what he met,
And praied him his viage for to let,[4]
As for that day, he prayd him for to abide.
His felaw that lay by his beddes side,
Gan for to laugh, and scorned him ful faste.
No dreme, quod he, may so my herte agaste,
That I wol leten for to do my thinges.
I sette not a straw by thy dreminges,
For swevens ben but vanitees and japes.
Men dreme al day of oules and of apes,
And eke of many a mase therwithal;
Men dreme of thing that never was, ne shal.
But sith I see that thou wolt here abide,
And thus forslouthen wilfully thy tide,[5]
God wot it reweth me,[6] and have good day.
And thus he took his leve, and went his way.

[1] Confessed. [2] Strange.
[3] Drowned. [4] Abandon his journey.
[5] Wilfully let go thy opportunity. [6] I pity you.

But or that he had half his cours ysailed,
N'ot I not why, ne what meschance it ailed,
But casuelly the shippes bottom rente,
And ship and man under the water wente
In sight of other shippes ther beside,
That with him sailed at the same tide.
And therfore, faire Pertelote so dere,
By swiche ensamples olde maist thou lere,
That no man shulde be to reccheles
Of dremes, for I say[1] thee douteles,
That many a dreme ful sore is for to drede.
Lo, in the lif of seint Kenelme, I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble king
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thing.
A litel or he were mordred on a day,
His mordre in his avision he say,[2]
His norice him expouned[3] every del
His sweven, and bade him for to kepe him wel
Fro treson; but he n'as but seven yere old,
And therfore litel tale hath he told
Of any dreme, so holy was his herte.
By God I hadde lever than my sherte,
That ye had red his legend, as have I.
Dame Pertelote, I say you trewely,
Macrobius, that writ the avision
In Affrike of the worthy Scipion,
Affirmeth dremes, and sayth that they ben
Warning of thinges, that men after seen.
And forthermore, I pray you loketh wel
In the olde Testament, of Daniel,
If he held dremes any vanitee.
Rede eke of Joseph, and ther shuln ye see
Wher dremes ben somtime (I say not alle)
Warning of thinges that shuln after falle.
Loke of Egipt the king, dan Pharao,
His baker and his boteler also,
Wheder they ne felten non effect in dremes.
Who so wol seken actes of sondry remes,[4]
May rede of dremes many a wonder thing.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lydie king,
Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified he shuld anhanged be?

[1] Tell.
[2] Saw in a vision.
[3] Explained.
[4] Realms.

Lo hire Andromacha,[1] Hectores wif,
That day that Hector shulde lese his lif,
She dremed on the same night beforne,
How that the lif of Hector shuld be lorne,
If thilke day he went into bataille:
She warned him, but it might not availle;
He went forth for to fighten natheles,
And was yslain anon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al to long to telle,
And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwelle.
Shortly I say, as for conclusion,
That I shal han of this avision
Adversitee: and I say forthermore,
That I ne tell of laxatives no store,
For they ben venimous, I wot it wel:
I hem deffie, I love hem never a del.
But let us speke of mirthe, and stinte all this:
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thing God hath sent me large grace
For whan I see the beautee of your face,
Ye ben so scarlet red about your eyen,
It maketh all my drede for to dien,
For, al so siker as *In principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio.
(Madame, the sentence of this Latine is,
Woman is mannes joye and mannes blis.)
For whan I fele a-night your softe side,
Al be it that I may not on you ride,
For that our perche is made so narwe, alas!
I am so ful of joye and of solas,
That I deffie bothe sweven and dreme.
And with that word he flew doun fro the beme,
For it was day, and eke his hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yerd.
Real[2] he was, he was no more aferd;
He fethered Pertelote twenty time,
And trade hire eke as oft, er it was prime.

[1] We must not look for this dream of Andromache in Homer. The first author who relates it is the fictitious Dares, c. xxiv. and Chaucer very probably took it from him, or from Guido de Columnis; or perhaps from Benoit de Sainte More, whose *Roman de Troye* I believe to have been that History of Dares, which Guido professes to follow, and has indeed almost entirely translated.—*Tyrwhitt.* [2] Royal.

He loketh as it were a grim leoun;
And on his toos he rometh up and doun,
Him deigned not to set his feet to ground:
He chukketh, whan he hath a corn yfound,
And to him rennen than his wives alle.
Thus real, as a prince is in his halle,
Leve I this Chaunteclere in his pasture;
And after wol I tell his aventure.
Whan that the month in which the world began,
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was complete, and ypassed were also,
Sithen March ended, thritty dayes and two,
Befell that Chaunteclere in all his pride,
His seven wives walking him beside,
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus had yronne
Twenty degrees and on, and somwhat more:
He knew by kind, and by non other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blisful steven.
The sonne, he sayd, is clomben up on heven
Twenty degrees and on, and more ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkeneth thise blisful briddes how they sing,
And see the freshe floures how they spring;
Ful is min herte of revel, and solas.
But sodenly him fell a sorweful cas;
For ever the latter ende of joye is wo:
God wote that worldly joye is sone ago:
And if a rethor[1] coude faire endite,
He in a chronicle might it saufly write,
As for a soveraine notabilitee.
Now every wise man let him herken me:
This story is al so trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot du lake,
That women holde in ful gret reverence.
Now wol I turne agen to my sentence.
A col fox,[2] ful of sleigh iniquitee,
That in the grove had wonned yeres three,

[1] A rhetorician, an orator.

[2] Skinner interprets this *a blackish fox*, as if it were *a cole fox*. Gl. Urr. It is much easier to refute this interpretation than to assign the true one. *Coll* appears from ver. 15339 to have been a common name for a dog. In composition, it is to be taken *in malam partem*, but in what precise sense I cannot say. See Chaucer's H. of F. B. iii. 187. *Coll-tregetour*—and in

By high imagination forecast,
The same night thurghout the hegges brast[1]
Into the yerd, ther Chaunteclere the faire
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repaire:
And in a bedde of wortes stille he lay,
Till it was passed undern[2] of the day,
Waiting his time on Chaunteclere to falle:
As gladly don thise homicides alle,
That in await liggen to mordre men.
O false morderour, rucking in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genelon!
O false dissimulour, o Greek Sinon,
That broughtest Troye al utterly to sorwe!
O Chaunteclere, accursed be the morwe,
That thou into thy yerd flew fro the bemes:
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes,
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewote[3] most nedes be,
After the opinion of certain clerkes.
Witnesse on him, that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is gret altercation
In this matere, and gret disputison,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne cannot boult it to the bren,[4]
As can the holy doctour Augustin,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardin,
Whether that Goddes worthy foreweting
Streineth me nedely for to don a thing,
(Nedely clepe I simple necessitee)
Or elles if free chois be granted me

the Mirr. for Mag. Leg. of Glendour, fol. 127. b. *Colprophet* is plainly put for a *false, lying* prophet. Heywood has an Epigram *Of coleprophet.* Cent. vi. Ep. 89!

Thy prophesy poysonly to the pricke goth:
Coleprophet and *colepoyson* thou art both.

And in his Proverbial Dialogues, P. i. ch. x. he has the following lines.

Coll under canstyk she can plaie on both hands:
Dissimulation well she understands.

I will add an allusion of our author, in the Test. of Love, B. ii. fol. cccxxxiii. b. to a story of one *Collo*, which I cannot explain. "Busiris slewe his gestes, and he was slain of Hercules his geste. Hugest betrayshed many men, and of *Collo* was he betrayed"—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Burst. [2] The third hour, nine o'clock.
[3] Foreknew, predestined.
[4] Sift it to the bran, *i. e.*, probe the truth thoroughly.

To do that same thing, or do it nought,
Though God forewot it, or that it was wrought;
Or if his weting streineth never a del,
But by necessitee condicionel.
I wol not han to don of swiche matere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
That took his conseil of his wif with sorwe
To walken in the yerd upon the morwe,
That he had met the dreme, as I you told.
Womennes conseiles ben ful often cold;
Womannes conseil brought us first to wo,
And made Adam fro paradis to go,
Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.
But for I n'ot, to whom I might displese,
If I conseil of women wolde blame,
Passe over, for I said it in my game.
Rede auctours, wher they trete of swiche matere,
And what they sayn of women ye mown here.
Thise ben the Cokkes wordes, and not mine;
I can non harme of no woman devine.
Faire in the sond, to bath hire merily,
Lith Pertelote, and all hire susters by,
Agein the sonne, and Chaunteclere so free
Sang merier than the Mermaid in the see,
For Phisiologus[1] sayth sikerly,
How that they singen wel and merily.
And so befell that as he cast his eye
Among the wortes on a boterflie,
He was ware of this fox that lay ful low.
Nothing ne list him thanne for to crow,
But cried anon cok, cok, and up he sterte,
As man that was affraied in his herte.
For naturelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
Though he never erst had seen it with his eye.
This Chaunteclere, whan he gan him espie,
He wold han fled, but that the fox anon
Said; gentil sire, alas! what wol ye don?
Be ye affraid of me that am your frend?
Now certes, I were werse than any fend,
If I to you wold harme or vilanie.
I n'am not come your conseil to espie.

[1] Probably an allusion to an old book entitled "Physiologus de natura xii. animalium."

But trewely the cause of my coming
Was only for to herken how ye sing:
For trewely ye han as mery a steven,[1]
As any angel hath, that is in heven;
Therwith ye han of musike more feling,
Than had Boece,[2] or any that can sing.
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse)
And eke your moder of hire gentillesse
Han in myn hous yben, to my gret ese:
And certes, sire, ful fain wold I you plese.
But for men speke of singing, I wol sey,
So mote I brouken wel min eyen twey,
Save you, ne herd I never man so sing,
As did your fader in the morwening.
Certes it was of herte all that he song.
And for to make his vois the more strong,
He wold so peine him, that with both his eyen
He muste winke, so loud he wolde crien,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And stretchen forth his necke long and smal.
And eke he was of swiche discretion,
That ther n'as no man in no region,
That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
I have wel red in dan Burnel the asse[3]
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
That, for a preestes sone yave him a knok
Upon his leg, while he was yonge and nice,
He made him for to lese his benefice.

[1] Voice. [2] Boethius wrote an elaborate treatise "de Musicâ."

[3] The story alluded to is in a poem of Nigel Wireker, entitled, *Burnellus, seu Speculum stultorum*, written in the time of Richard I. The story supposes, that the priest's son, when he was to be ordained, directed his servant to call him at cock-crowing, and that the cock, whose leg he had formerly broken, having overheard this, purposely refrained from crowing at his usual time; by which artifice the young man was suffered to sleep till the ordination was over.

Burnell is used as a nickname for the ass in the Chester Whitsun Playes. MS. *Harl.* 2013. See the note on ver. 3539. In the pageant of Balaam, he says—

Go forth, *Burnell*, go forth, go.
What? the devil, my asse will not go.

and again, fol. 36. b.

Burnell, why begilest thou me?

The original word was, probably, *Brunell*, from its brown colour; as the Fox below, ver. 15340, is called *Russell*, from his red colour, I suppose. —*Tyrwhitt.*

But certain ther is no comparison
Betwix the wisdom and discretion
Of youre fader, and his subtilitee.
Now singeth, sire, for Seinte Charitee,
Let see, can ye your fader contrefete?
This Chaunteclere his winges gan to bete,
As man that coud not his treson espie,
So was he ravished with his flaterie.
Alas! ye lordes, many a false flatour
Is in your court, and many a losengeour,[1]
That pleseth you wel more, by my faith,
Than he that sothfastnesse[2] unto you saith.
Redeth Ecclesiast of flaterie,
Beth ware, ye lordes, of hire trecherie.
This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowen loude for the nones:
And dan Russel[3] the fox stert up at ones,
And by the gargat hente[4] Chaunteclere,
And on his back toward the wood him bere.
For yet ne was ther no man that him sued.
O destinee, that maist not ben eschued!
Alas, that Chaunteclere flew fro the bemes!
Alas, his wif ne raughte[5] not of dremes!
And on a Friday fell all this meschance.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesance,
Sin that thy servant was this Chaunteclere,
And in thy service did all his powere,
More for delit, than world to multiplie,
Why wolt thou suffre him on thy day to die?
O Gaufride,[6] dere maister soverain,
That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slain
With shot, complainedest his deth so sore,
Why ne had I now thy science and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
(For on a Friday sothly slain was he)
Than wold I shew you how that I coud plaine,
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his paine.

[1] Flatterer.
[2] The plain truth.
[3] So called from his *red* colour.
[4] Seized by the gorget, or throat.
[5] Thought.
[6] He alludes to a passage in the *Nova Poetria* of Geoffrey de Vinsauf, published not long after the death of Richard I. In this work

Certes swiche cry, ne lamentation
N'as never of ladies made, whan Ilion
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd
Whan he had hent king Priam by the berd,
And slain him, (as saith us *Eneidos*)[1]
As maden all the hennes in the cloos,
Whan they had seen of Chaunteclere the sight.
But soverainly dame Pertelote shright,
Ful louder than did Hasdruballes wif,
Whan that hire husbond hadde ylost his lif,
And that the Romaines hadden brent Cartage,
She was so ful of turment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she sterte,
And brent hireselven with a stedfast herte.
O woful hennes, right so criden ye,
As, whan that Nero brente the citee
Of Rome, cried the senatoures wives,
For that hir husbonds losten alle hir lives;
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slain.
Now wol I turne unto my tale again.
The sely[2] widewe, and hire doughtren two,
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at the dores sterten they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wode is gon,
And bare upon his back the cok away:
They crieden, out! harow and wala wa!
A ha the fox! and after him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man;

author has not only given instructions for composing in the different styles of Poetry, but also examples. His specimen of the plaintive kind of composition begins thus:—

Noustria, sub clypeo regis defensa Ricardi,
Indefensa modo, gestu testare dolorem.
Exundent oculi lacrymas; exterminet ora
Pallor; connodet digitos tortura; cruentet
Interiora dolor, et verberet æthera clamor:
Tota peris ex morte sua. Mors non fuit ejus,
Sed tua; non una, sed publica mortis origo.
O Veneris lacrymosa dies! o sydus amarum!
Illa dies tua nox fuit, et Venus illa venenum,
Illa dedit vulnus, &c.

These lines are sufficient to shew the object, and the propriety, of Chaucer's ridicule. The whole poem is printed in Leyser's *Hist. Po. Med. Ævi.* p. 862—978.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] *I. e.*, Virgil. [2] Harmless.

Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond,
And Malkin, with hire distaf in hire hond;
Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges
So fered were for berking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought hir hertes breke.
They yelleden as fendes don in helle:
The dokes crieden as men wold hem quelle:
The gees for fere flewen over the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarme of bees,
So hidous was the noise, a *benedicite!*
Certes he Jakke Straw,[1] and his meinie,
Ne maden never shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,
As thilke day was made upon the fox.
Of bras they broughten beemes and of box,
Of horn and bone, in which they blew and pouped,
And therwithal they shriked and they houped;
It semed, as that the heven shulde falle.
Now, goode men, I pray you herkeneth alle;
Lo, how fortune turneth sodenly
The hope and pride eke of hire enemy.
This cok that lay upon the foxes bake,
In all his drede, unto the fox he spake,
And sayde; sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I sayn, (as wisly God helpe me)
Turneth agein, ye proude cherles alle;
A veray pestilence upon you falle.
Now am I come unto the wodes side,
Maugre your hed, the cok shal here abide;
I wol him ete in faith, and that anon.
The fox answered, in faith it shal be don:
And as he spake the word, al sodenly
The cok brake from his mouth deliverly,
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And whan the fox saw that the cok was gon,
Alas! quod he, o Chaunteclere, alas!
I have (quod he) ydon to you trespas,

[1] The *noise* made by the followers of this rebel, to which our author alludes, he had probably heard himself. It is called by Walsingham p. 251, *clamor horrendissimus, non similis clamoribus quos edere solent homines, sed qui ultra omnem astimationem superaret omnes clamor humanos, et maxime posset assimulari ululatibus infernalium incolarum.*—*Tyrwhitt, gl.*

In as moche as I maked you aferd,
Whan I you hente, and brought out of your yerd;
But, sire, I did it in no wikke entente:
Come doun, and I shal tell you what I mente.
I shal say sothe to you, God helpe me so.
Nay than, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two.
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
If thou begile me oftener than ones.
Thou shalt no more thurgh thy flaterie
Do me to sing and winken with myn eye.
For he that winketh, whan he shulde see,
Al wilfully, God let him never the.
Nay, quod the fox, but God yeve him meschance
That is so indiscrete of governance,
That jangleth, whan that he shuld hold his pees.
Lo, which it is for to be reccheles
And negligent, and trust on flaterie.
But ye that holden this tale a folie,
As of a fox, or of a cok, or hen,
Taketh the moralitee therof, good men.
For Seint Poule sayth, That all that writen is,
To our doctrine it is ywritten ywis.
Taketh the fruit, and let the chaf be stille.
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As sayth my Lord, so make us all good men;
And bring us to thy highe blisse. *Amen.*

Sire Nonnes Preest, our hoste sayd anon,
Yblessed be thy breche and every ston;
This was a mery tale of Chaunteclere.
But by my trouthe, if thou were seculere,
Thou woldest ben a tredefoule a right:
For if thou have corage as thou hast might,
Thee were nede of hennes, as I wene,
Ye mo than seven times seventene.
Se, whiche braunes hath this gentil preest,
So gret a necke, and swiche a large breest!
He loketh as a sparhauk with his eyen;
Him nedeth not his colour for to dien
With Brasil, ne with grain of Portingale.
But, sire, faire falle you for your tale.
And after that, he with ful mery chere
Sayd to another, as ye shulen here.

* * * * * *

The Second Nonnes Tale.

15469–15496.

The ministre and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in English idelnesse,
That porter at the gate is of delices,
To eschuen, and by hire contrary hire oppresse,
That is to sain, by leful besinesse,
Wel oughte we to don al our entente,
Lest that the fend thurgh idelnesse us hente.

For he that with his thousand cordes slie
Continuelly us waiteth to beclappe,
Whan he may man in idelnesse espie,
He can so lightly cacche him in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,[1]
He n'is not ware the fend hath him in hond:
Wel ought us werche, and idelnesse withstond.

And though men dradden never for to die,
Yet see men wel by reson douteles,
That idelnesse is rote of slogardie,
Of which ther never cometh no good encrees,
And see that slouthe holdeth hem in a lees,[2]
Only to slepe, and for to ete and drinke,
And to devouren all that other swinke.

And for to put us from swiche idelnesse,
That cause is of so gret confusion,
I have here don my feithful besinesse
After the Legende in translation
Right of thy glorious lif and passion,
Thou with thy gerlond, wrought of rose and lilie,
Thee mene I, maid and martir Seinte Cecilie.

[1] Skirt. [2] Leash.

And thou, that arte floure of virgines all,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,
To thee at my beginning first I call,
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me endite
Thy maidens deth, that wan thurgh hire merite
The eternal lif, and over the fend victorie,
As man may after reden in hire storie.

Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules cure,
In whom that God of bountee chees to won;
Thou humble and high over every creature,
Thou nobledest so fer forth our nature,
That no desdaine the maker had of kinde
His son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde.

Within the cloystre blisful of thy sides,
Toke mannes shape the eternal love and pees,
That of the trine compas Lord and gide is,
Whom erthe, and see, and heven out of relees[1]
Ay herien;[2] and thou, virgine wemmeles,[3]
Bare of thy body (and dweltest maiden pure)
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swiche pitee,
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,
Not only helpest hem that praien thee,
But oftentime of thy benignitee
Ful freely, or that men thin helpe beseche,
Thou goest beforne, and art hir lives leche.

Now helpe, thou meke and blisful faire maide,
Me flemed[4] wretch, in this desert of galle;
Thinke on the woman Cananee, that saide
That whelpes eten som of the cromes alle
That from hir Lordes table ben yfalle;
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
Be sinful, yet accepteth my beleve.

[1] Without ceasing.
[2] Praise.
[3] Spotless.
[4] Banished.

And for that feith is ded withouten werkes,
So for to werken yeve me wit and space,
That I be quit from thennes[1] that most derke is;
O thou, that art so faire and ful of grace,
Be thou min advocat in that high place,
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,
Thou Cristes mother, doughter dere of Anne.

And of thy light my soule in prison light,
That troubled is by the contagion
Of my body, and also by the wight
Of erthly lust, and false affection:
O haven of refute,[2] o salvation
Of hem that ben in sorwe and in distresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet pray I you that reden that I write,
Foryeve me, that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite.
For both have I the wordes and sentence
Of him, that at the seintes reverence
The storie wrote, and folowed hire legende,
And pray you that ye wol my werk amende.

First wol I you the name of Seinte Cecilie
Expoune, as men may in hire storie see;
It is to sayn in English, Hevens lilie,
For pure chastnesse of virginitee,
Or for she whitnesse had of honestee,
And grene of conscience, and of good fame
The swote[3] savour, Lilie was hire name.

Or Cecilie is to sayn, the way to blinde,
For she ensample was by good teching;
Or elles Cecilie, as I writen finde,
Is joined by a maner conjoining
Of heven and *Lia*, and here in figuring
The heven is set for thought of holinesse,
And *Lia*, for hire lasting besinesse.

Cecilie may eke be sayd in this manere,
Wanting of blindnesse, for hire grete light
Of sapience, and for hire thewes[4] clere.

[1] Thence, *i. e.*, from that place.
[2] Refuge.
[3] Sweet.
[4] Manners, qualities.

Or elles lo, this maidens name bright
Of heven and *Leos* cometh, for which by right
Men might hire wel the heven of peple calle,
Ensample of good and wise werkes alle:

For *Leos* peple in English is to say;
And right as men may in the heven see
The sonne and mone, and sterres every way.
Right so men gostly, in this maiden free
Sawen of faith the magnanimitee,
And eke the clerenesse hole of sapience,
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence.

And right so as thise Philosophres write,
That heven is swift and round, and eke brenning,
Right so was faire Cecilie the white
Ful swift and besy in every good werking,
And round and hole in good persevering,
And brenning ever in charitee ful bright:
Now have I you declared what she hight.

This maiden bright Cecile, as hire lif saith,
Was come of Romaines and of noble kind,
And from hire cradle fostred in the faith
Of Crist, and bare his Gospel in hire mind:
She never cesed, as I writen find,
Of hire prayere, and God to love and drede,
Beseching him to kepe hire maidenhede.

And whan this maiden shuld until a man
Ywedded be, that was ful yonge of age,
Which that ycleped was Valerian,
And day was comen of hire marriage,
She ful devout and humble in hire corage,
Under hire robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Had next hire flesh yclad hire in an haire.

And while that the organs maden melodie,
To God alone thus in hire hert song she;
O Lord, my soule and eke my body gie
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be.
And for his love that died upon the tree,
Every second or thridde day she fast,
Ay bidding in hire orisons ful fast.

The night came, and to bedde must she gon
With hire husbond, as it is the manere,
And prively she said to him anon;
O swete and wel beloved spouse dere,
Ther is a conseil, and ye wol it here,
Which that right fayn I wold unto you saie,
So that ye swere, ye wol it not bewraie.

Valerian gan fast unto hire swere,
That for no cas, ne thing that mighte be,
He shulde never to non bewraien here;
And than at erst thus to him saide she;
I have an Angel which that loveth me,
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe;

And if that he may felen out of drede,
That ye me touch or love in vilanie,
He right anon wol sleen you with the dede,
And in your youthe thus ye shulden die.
And if that ye in clene love me gie,
He wol you love as me, for your clenenesse,
And shew to you his joye and his brightnesse.

This Valerian, corrected as God wold,
Answerd again, if I shal trusten thee,
Let me that angel seen, and him behold;
And if that it a veray angel be,
Than wol I don as thou hast prayed me;
And it thou love another man, forsothe
Right with this swerd than wol I slee you bothe.

Cecile answerd anon right in this wise;
If that you list, the angel shul ye see,
So that ye trowe on Crist, and you baptise;
Goth forth to Via Apia (quod she)
That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,
And to the poure folkes that ther dwellen
Say hem right thus, as that I shal you tellen.

Tell hem, that I Cecile you to hem sent
To shewen you the good Urban the old,
For secree nedes, and for good entent;
And whan that ye Seint Urban han behold,

Tell him the wordes whiche I to you told;
And whan that he hath purged you fro sinne,
Than shal ye seen that angel er ye twinne.[1]

Valerian is to the place gon,
And right as he was taught by hire lerning,
He fond this holy old Urban anon
Among the seintes buriels louting:[2]
And he anon withouten tarying
Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,
Urban for joye his hondes gan upholde.

The teres from his eyen let he falle;
Almighty Lord, o Jesu Crist, quod he,
Sower of chast conseil, hierde[3] of us alle,
The fruit of thilke seed of chastitee
That thou hast sow in Cecile, take to thee:
Lo, like a besy bee withouten gile
Thee serveth ay thin owen thral[4] Cecile.

For thilke spouse, that she toke but newe
Ful like a fiers leon, she sendeth here
As meke as ever was any lambe to ewe.
And with that word anon ther gan apere
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,
That had a book with lettres of gold in hond,
And gan beforne Valerian to stond.

Valerian, as ded, fell doun for drede,
Whan he him saw; and he up hent him tho,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede;
On Lord, on faith, on God withouten mo,
On Cristendom, and fader of all also
Aboven all, and over all every wher:
Thise wordes all with gold ywriten were.

Whan this was red, than said this olde man,
Levest thou this thing or no? say ye or nay.
I leve all this thing, quod Valerian,
For sother[5] thing than this, I dare wel say,
Under the heven no wight thinken may.
Tho vanished the olde man, he n'iste wher,
And pope Urban him cristened right ther.

[1] Depart. [2] Kneeling.
[3] Shepherd. [4] Servant. [5] Truer.

Valerian goth home, and fint[1] Cecilie
Within his chambre with an angel stonde:
This angel had of roses and of lilie
Corones two, the which he bare in honde,
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that on, and after gan he take
That other to Valerian hire make.

With body clene, and with unwemmed[2] thought
Kepeth ay wel thise corones two, quod he,
From paradis to you I have hem brought,
Ne never mo ne shul they roten be,
Ne lese hir swete savour, trusteth me,
Ne never wight shal seen hem with his eye,
But he be chaste, and hate vilanie.

And thou, Valerian, for thou so sone
Assentedest to good conseil, also
Say what thee list, and thou shalt han thy bone.
I have a brother, quod Valerian tho,
That in this world I love no man so,
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the trouth, as I do in this place.

The angel sayd; God liketh thy request,
And bothe with the palme of martirdome
Ye shullen come unto his blisful rest.
And with that word, Tiburce his brother come.
And whan that he the savour undernome,
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Within his herte he gan to wonder fast,

And said; I wonder this time of the yere
Whennes that swete savour cometh so
Of roses and lilies, that I smelle here;
For though I had hem in min hondes two,
The savour might in me no deper go:
The swete smel, that in min herte I find,
Hath changed me all in another kind.

Valerian saide; two corones han we
Snow-white and rose-red, that shinen clere,
Which that thin eyen han no might to see

[1] Found. [2] Unblemished.

And as thou smellest hem thurgh my praiere,
So shalt thou seen hem, leve brother dere,
If it so be thou wolt withouten slouthe
Beleve aright, and know the veray trouthe.

Tiburce answered; saiest thou this to me
In sothnesse, or in dreme herken I this?
In dremes, quod Valerian, han we be
Unto this time, brother min, ywis:
But now at erst in trouthe our dwelling is.
How wost thou this, quod Tiburce, in what wise?
Quod Valerian; that shal I thee devise.

The angel of God hath me the trouth ytaught,
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wilt reney
The idoles, and be clene, and elles naught.
[And of the miracle of thise corones twey
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to sey;
Solempnely this noble doctour dere
Commendeth it, and saith in this manere.

The palme of martirdome for to receive,
Seinte Cecilie, fulfilled of Goddes yeft,[1]
The world and eke hire chambre gan she weive;[2]
Witnesse Tiburces and Ceciles shrift,
To which God of his bountee wolde shift
Corones two, of floures wel smelling,
And made his angel hem the corones bring.

The maid hath brought thise men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth certain
Devotion of chastitee to love.]
Tho shewed him Cecile all open and plain,
That all idoles n'is but a thing in vain,
For they ben dombe, and therto they ben deve,
And charged him his idoles for to leve.

Who so that troweth not this, a best he is,
Quod this Tiburce, if that I shal not lie.
And she gan kisse his brest whan she herd this,
And was ful glad he coude trouth espie:
This day I take thee for min allie,
Saide this blisful faire maiden dere;
And after that she said as ye may here.

[1] Gift. [2] Waive.

Lo, right so as the love of Crist (quod she)
Made me thy brothers wif, right in that wise
Anon for mine allie here take I thee,
Sithen that thou wolt thin idoles despise.
Goth with thy brother now and thee baptise,
And make thee clene, so that thou maist behold
The angels face, of which thy brother told.

Tiburce answered, and saide; brother dere,
First tell me whither I shal, and to what man.
To whom? quod he; come forth with goode cher,
I wol thee lede unto the pope Urban.
To Urban? brother min Valerian,
Quod tho Tiburce, wilt thou me thider lede?
Me thinketh that it were a wonder dede.

Ne menest thou not Urban (quod he tho)
That is so often damned[1] to be ded,
And woneth in halkes[2] alway to and fro,
And dare not ones putten forth his hed?
Men shuld him brennen in a fire so red,
If he were found, or that men might him spie,
And we also, to bere him compagnie.

And while we seken thilke divinitee,
That is yhid in heven prively,
Algate[3] ybrent in this world shuld we be.
To whom Cecile answered boldely;
Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully
This lif to lese, min owen dere brother,
If this were living only and non other.

But ther is better lif in other place,
That never shal be lost, ne drede thee nought:
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,
That fadres sone which alle thinges wrought;
And all that wrought is with a skilful thought,
The gost, that from the fader gan procede,
Hath souled hem[4] withouten any drede.

By word and by miracle he Goddes sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared here,
That ther is other lif ther men may wone.

[1] Condemned.
[2] Dwelleth in corners, hiding-places.
[3] By all means.
[4] Endued them with a soul.

To whom answerd Tiburce; o suster dere,
Ne saidest thou right now in this manere,
Ther n'as but o God, lord in sothfastnesse,
And now of three how mayst thou bere witnesse?

That shal I tell, quod she, or that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences three,
Memorie, engine, and intellect also,
So in o being of divinitee
Three persones mowen ther righte wel be.
Tho gan she him ful besily to preche
Of Cristes sonde,[1] and of his peines teche,

And many pointes of his passion;
How Goddes sone in this world was withhold.
To don mankinde pleine remission,
That was ybound in sinne and cares cold.
All this thing she unto Tiburce told,
And after this Tiburce in good entent,
With Valerian to pope Urban he went,

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light
He cristened him, and made him in that place
Parfite in his lerning and Goddes knight.
And after this Tiburce gat swiche grace,
That every day he saw in time and space
The angel of God, and every maner bone
That he God axed, it was sped ful sone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to sain
How many wonders Jesus for hem wrought.
But at the last, to tellen short and plain,
The sergeaunts of the toun of Rome hem sought,
And hem before Almache the prefect brought,
Which hem apposed,[2] and knew all hire entent,
And to the image of Jupiter hem sent;

And said; who so wol nought do sacrifice,
Swap[3] of his hed, this is my sentence here.
Anon thise martyrs, that I you devise,
On Maximus, that was an officere
Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,[4]

[1] Message, teaching.
[2] Opposed, or put them to the question. [3] Strike.
[4] Cornicularius, an officer under the Roman government.

Hem hent, and whan he forth the seintes lad,
Himself he wept for pitee that he had.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore,
He gate him of the turmentoures leve,
And lad hem to his hous withouten more;
And with hir preching, or that it were eve,
They gonnen fro the turmentours to reve,[1]
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk eche on
The false faith, to trowe in God alone.

Cecilie came, whan it was waxen night,
With preestes, that hem cristened all yfere;
And afterward, whan day was waxen light,
Cecilie hem said with a ful stedfast chere;
Now, Cristes owen knightes leve and dere,
Caste all away the werkes of derkenesse,
And armeth you in armes of brightnesse.

Ye han forsoth ydon a gret bataille;
Your cours is don, your faith han ye conserved;
Goth to the croune of lif that may not faille;
The rightful juge, which that ye han served,
Shal yeve it you, as ye han it deserved.
And whan this thing was said, as I devise,
Men ledde hem forth to don the sacrifice.

But whan they weren to the place ybrought,
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
They n'olde encense, ne sacrifice right nought,
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun,
With humble herte and sad devotioun,
And losten bothe hir hedes in the place;
Hir soules wenten to the king of grace.

This Maximus, that saw this thing betide,
With pitous teres told it anon right,
That he hir soules saw to heven glide
With angels, ful of clerenesse and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius did him to-bete
With whip of led, til he his lif gan lete.

[1] Take away.

Cecile him toke, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softely,
Within hir burying place, under the ston.
And after this Almachius hastily
Bad his ministres fetchen openly
Cecile, so that she might in his presence
Don sacrifice, and Jupiter encense.

But they converted at hire wise lore[1]
Wepten ful sore, and yaven ful credence
Unto hire word, and crieden more and more;
Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference
Is veray God, this is all our sentence,
That hath so good a servant him to serve:
Thus with o vois we trowen[2] though we sterve.[3]

Almachius, that herd of this doing,
Bad fetchen Cecile, that he might hire see:
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axing;
What maner woman arte thou? quod he.
I am a gentilwoman borne, quod she.
I axe thee, quod he, though it thee greve,
Of thy religion and of thy beleve.

Why than began your question folily,
Quod she, that woldest two answers conclude
In o demand? ye axen lewedly.
Almache answerd to that similitude,
Of whennes cometh thin answering so rude?
Of whennes? (quod she, whan that she was freined)
Of conscience, and of good faith unfeined.

Almachius said; ne takest thou non hede
Of my power? and she him answerd this;
Your might (quod she) ful litel is to drede;
For every mortal mannes power n'is
But like a bladder ful of wind ywis:
For with a nedles point, whan it is blow,
May all the bost of it be laid ful low.

Ful wrongfully begonnest thou, (quod he)
And yet in wrong is al thy perseverance:
Wost[4] thou not how our mighty princes free
Have thus commanded and made ordinance,
That every cristen wight shal han penance

[1] Advice, teaching. [2] Believe. [3] Die. [4] Knowest.

But if that he his Cristendome withseye,
And gon al quite, if he wol it reneye?

Your princes erren, as your nobley doth,
Quod tho Cecile, and with a wood sentence
Ye make us gilty, and it is not soth:
For ye that knowen wel our innocence,
For as moche as we don ay reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

But we that knowen thilke name so
For vertuous, we may it not withseye.
Almache answered; chese on of thise two,
Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye,
That thou mow now escapen by that wey.
At which this holy blisful fayre maid
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge said:

O juge confuse in thy nicetee,
Woldest thou that I reneye innocence?
To maken me a wicked wight (quod she)
Lo, he dissimuleth here in audience,
He stareth and wodeth[1] in his advertence.[2]
To whom Almachius said; Unsely[3] wretch,
Ne wost thou not how far my might may stretch?

Han not our mighty princes to me yeven
Ya bothe power and eke auctoritee
To maken folk to dien or to liven?
Why spekest thou so proudly than to me?
I ne speke nought but stedfastly, quod she,
Not proudely, for I say, as for my side,
We haten dedly thilke vice of pride.

And if thou drede not a soth for to here,
Than wol I shewe al openly by right,
That thou hast made a ful gret lesing here.
Thou saist, thy princes han thee yeven might
Both for to slee and for to quiken a wight,
Thou that ne maist but only lif bereve,
Thou hast non other power ne no leve.

[1] Raveth. [2] Attention. [3] Unhappy.

But thou maist sayn, thy princes han thee maked
Ministre of deth; for if thou speke of mo,
Thou liest; for thy power is ful naked.
Do way thy boldnesse, said Almachius tho,
And sacrifice to our goddes, er thou go.
I recke not what wrong that thou me proffre,
For I can suffre it as a philosophre.

But thilke wronges may I not endure,
That thou spekest of our goddes here, quod he.
Cecile answerd; o nice creature,
Thou saidest no word sin thou spake to me,
That I ne knew therwith thy nicetee,
And that thou were in every maner wise
A lewed officer, a vain justice.

Ther lacketh nothing to thin utter[1] eyen
That thou n'art blind; for thing that we seen alle
That is a ston, that men may wel espien,
That ilke ston a god thou wolt it calle.
I rede thee let thin hond upon it falle,
And tast it wel, and ston thou shalt it find,
Sin that thou seest not with thin eyen blind.

It is a shame that the peple shal
So scornen thee, and laugh at thy folie:
For comunly men wot it wel over al,
That mighty God is in his hevens hie;
And thise images, wel maist thou espie,
To thee ne to hemself may not profite,
For in effect they be not worth a mite.

Thise and swiche other wordes saide she,
And he wex wroth, and bade men shuld hire lede
Home til hire house, and in hire hous (quod he)
Brenne hire right in a bath, with flames rede.
And as he bade, right so was don the dede;
For in a bathe they gonne hire faste shetten,
And night and day gret fire they under betten.

The longe night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathes hete,
She sate al cold, and felt of it no wo,
It made hire not a drope for to swete:
But in that bath hire lif she muste lete.

[1] Outer.

For he Almache, with a full wicke
To sleen hire in the bath his sonde

Three strokes in the nekke he
The tormentour, but fleh no mane
He mighte not smite all hire nek
And sir ther was that tirnie an or
That no man shulde don man swi
The fourthe stroke to smiten, sut
This tormentour ne dorste do no

But half ded, with hire nekke
He left hire lie, and on his way
The cristen folk, which that abo
With shetes han the blood ful fa
Three dayes lived she in this tur
And never cesed hem the faith t
That she had fostred hem, she g

And hem she yaf hire mebles
And to the pope Urban betoke
And sayd; I axed this of heven
To have respit three dayes and n
To recommend to you, or that I
Thise soules lo, and that I might
Here of min hous perpetuellich

Seint Urban, with his dekenes
The body fette, and buried it by
Among his other seintes honestl
Hire hous the cherche of seinte
Seint Urban halowed it, as he w
In which unto this day in noble
Man don to Crist and to his sein

1 Order. 2 P

THE CHANONES YEMANNES PROLOGUE.

16022–16051.

WHAN that tolde was the lif of seinte Cecile,
Er we had ridden fully five mile,[1]
At Boughton under blee us gan atake[2]
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,
And undernethe he wered a white surplis.
His hakeney, which that was al pomelee gris,
So swatte, that it wonder was to see,
It semed as he had priked miles three.
The horse eke that his yeman rode upon,
So swatte, that unnethes might he gon.
About the peytrel stood the fome ful hie,
He was of fome as flecked[3] as a pie.
A male tweifold[4] on his croper lay,
It semed that he caried litel array,
Al light for sommer rode this worthy man.
And in my herte wondren I began
What that he was, til that I understode,
How that his cloke was sowed to his hode;
For which whan I had long avised me,
I demed him some chanon for to be.
His hat heng at his back doun by a las,[5]
For he had ridden more than trot or pas,
He had ay priked like as he were wode.
A clote-lefe[6] he had laid under his hode
For swete, and for to kepe his hed fro hete.
But it was joye for to seen him swete;
His forehed dropped, as a stillatorie[7]
Were ful of plantaine or of paritorie.[8]
And whan that he was come, he gan to crie,
God save (quod he) this joly compagnie.

[1] See a long dissertation in Tyrwhitt's notes.
[2] Overtake.
[3] Sprinkled with foam.
[4] Double budget.
[5] Lace.
[6] A leaf of the burdock.
[7] Still.
[8] Pellitory.

Fast have I priked (quod he) for your sake,
Because that I wolde you atake,
To riden in this mery compagnie.
His yeman was eke ful of curtesie,
And saide; Sires, now in the morwe tide
Out of your hostelrie I saw you ride,
And warned here my lord and soverain,
Which that to riden with you is ful fain,
For his disport; he loveth daliance.
Frend, for thy warning God yeve thee good chance,
Than said our hoste; certain it wolde seme
Thy lord were wise, and so I may wel deme;
He is ful joconde also dare I leye:
Can he ought tell a mery tale or tweie,
With which he gladen may this compagnie?
Who, sire? my lord? Ye, sire, withouten lie,
He can of mirth and eke of jolitee
Not but ynough; also, sire, trusteth me,
And ye him knew al so wel as do I,
Ye wolden wondre how wel and craftily
He coude werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath take on him many a gret emprise,
Which were ful harde for any that is here
To bring about, but they of him it lere.[1]
As homely as he rideth amonges you,
If ye him knew, it wold be for your prow:[2]
Ye wolden not forgon his acquaintance
For mochel good, I dare lay in balance
All that I have in my possession.
He is a man of high discression,
I warne you wel, he is a passing man.
Wel, quod our hoste, I pray thee tell me than,
Is he a clerk, or non? tell what he is.
Nay, he is greter than a clerk ywis,
Saide this yeman, and in wordes fewe,
Hoste, of his craft somwhat I wol you shewe.
I say, my lord can swiche a subtiltee,
(But all his craft ye moun not wete of me,
And somwhat help I yet to his werking)
That all the ground on which we ben riding
Till that we come to Canterbury toun,
He coud al clene turnen up so doun,

[1] Learned. [2] Profit, advantage.

And pave it all of silver and of gold.
  And whan this yeman had this tale ytolde
Unto our hoste, he said; *benedicite*,
This thing is wonder mervaillous to me,
Sin that thy lord is of so high prudence,
Because of which men shulde him reverence,
That of his worship rekketh he so lite;
His overest sloppe it is not worth a mite
As in effect to him, so mote I go;
It is all baudy[1] and to-tore[2] also.
Why is thy lord so sluttish I thee preye,
And is of power better cloth to beye,
If that his dede acorded with thy speche?
Telle me that, and that I thee beseche.
  Why? quod this yeman, wherto axe ye me?
God helpe me so, for he shal never the:[3]
(But I wol not avowen that I say,
And therfore kepe it secree I you pray)
He is to wise in faith, as I beleve.
Thing that is overdon, it wol not preve
Aright, as clerkes sain, it is a vice;
Wherfore in that I hold him lewed and nice.
For whan a man hath overgret a wit,
Ful oft him happeth to misusen it:
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.
God it amende, I can say now no more.
  Therof no force, good yeman, quod our host,
Sin of the conning of thy lord thou wost,
Telle how he doth, I pray thee hertily,
Sin that he is so crafty and so sly.
Wher dwellen ye, if it to tellen be?
  In the subarbes of a toun, quod he,
Lurking in hernes[4] and in lanes blinde,
Wheras thise robbours and thise theves by kinde
Holden hir privee fereful residence,
As they that dare not shewen hir presence,
So faren we, if I shal say the sothe.
  Yet, quod our hoste, let me talken to the;
Why art thou so discoloured of thy face?
  Peter, quod he, God yeve it harde grace,
I am so used the hote fire to blow,
That it hath changed my colour I trow;

[1] Dirty. [2] Torn.
[3] Thrive. [4] Corners.

I n'am not wont in no mirrour to prie,
But swinke sore, and lerne to multiplie.
We blundren ever, and poren in the fire,
And for all that we faille of our desire,
For ever we lacken our conclusion.
To mochel folk we don illusion,
And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,
And make hem wenen at the leste wey,
That of a pound we connen maken twey,
Yet is it false; and ay we han good hope
It for to don, and after it we grope:
But that science is so fer us beforne,
We mowen not, although we had it sworne,
It overtake, it slit away so fast;
It wol us maken beggers at the last.

While this yeman was thus in his talking,
This Chanon drow him nere, and herd all thing
Which this yeman spake, for suspecion
Of mennes speche ever had this Chanon:
For Caton sayth, that he that gilty is,
Demeth all thing be spoken of him ywis:
That was the cause, he gan so nigh him drawe
To his yeman, to herken all his sawe,
And thus he saide unto his yeman tho;
Hold thou thy pees, and speke no wordes mo:
For if thou do, thou shalt it dere abie.
Thou sclaundrest me here in this compagnie,
And eke discoverest that thou shuldest hide.

Ye, quod our hoste, tell on, what so betide;
Of all his thretening recke not a mite.

In faith, quod he, no more I do but lite.
And whan this Chanon saw it wold not be,
But his yeman wold tell his privetee,
He fled away for veray sorwe and shame.

A, quod the yeman, here shal rise a game:
All that I can anon I wol you telle,
Sin he is gon; the foule fend him quelle;
For never hereafter wol I with him mete
For peny ne for pound, I you behete.
He that me broughte first unto that game,
Er that he die, sorwe have he and shame.
For it it is ernest to me by faith;
That fele I wel, what that any man saith;

And yet for all my smert, and all my grief,
For all my sorwe, labour, and meschief,
I coude never leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God my wit mighte suffice
To tellen all that longeth to that art;
But natheles, yet wol I tellen part;
Sin that my lord is gon, I wol not spare,
Swiche thing as that I know, I wol declare.

The Chanones Yemannes Tale.

With this Chanon I dwelt have seven yere,
And of his science am I never the nere:
All that I had, I have ylost therby,
And God wot, so han many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be right fresh and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array,
Now may I were an hose upon min hed;
And wher my colour was both fresh and red,
Now is it wan, and of a leden hewe;
(Who so it useth, so shal he it rewe)
And of my swinke yet blered is min eye;
Lo which avantage is to multiplie!
That sliding science hath me made so bare,
That I have no good, wher that ever I fare;
And yet I am endetted so therby
Of gold, that I have borwed trewely,
That while I live, I shal it quiten never;
Let every man be ware by me for ever.
What maner man that casteth him therto,
If he continue, I hold his thrift ydo;
So help me God, therby shal he nat winne,
But empte his purse, and make his wittes thinne.
And whan he, thurgh his madnesse and folie,
Hath lost his owen good thurgh jupartie,[1]

[1] So MS. C. 1. I have followed it, as it comes nearest to the true original of our word *jeopardie*, which our etymologists have sadly mistaken. They deduce it from *J'ai perdu*, or *Jeu perdu;* but I rather believe it to be a corruption of *Jeu parti*. A *jeu parti* is properly a game, in which the chances are exactly even. See Froissart, v. i. c. 234. Ils

Than he exciteth other folk therto,
To lese hir good as he himself hath do.
For unto shrewes joye it is and ese
To have hir felawes in peine and disese.
Thus was I ones lerned of a clerk;
Of that no charge; I wol speke of our werk.
Whan we be ther as we shuln exercise
Our elvish craft, we semen wonder wise,
Our termes ben so clergial and queinte.
I blow the fire til that myn herte feinte.
What shuld I tellen eche proportion
Of thinges, whiche that we werchen upon,
As on five or six unces, may wel be,
Of silver, or som other quantitee?
And besie me to tellen you the names,
As orpiment, brent bones, yren squames,[1]
That into poudre grounden ben ful smal?
And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt yput in, and also pepere,
Beforn thise poudres that I speke of here,
And wel ycovered with a lampe of glas?
And of moche other thing which that ther was?
And of the pottes and glasses engluting,[2]
That of the aire might passen out no thing?
And of the esy fire, and smert also,
Which that was made? and of the care and wo,
That we had in our materes subliming,
And in amalgaming, and calcening
Of quiksilver, ycleped mercurie crude?
For all our sleightes we can not conclude.
Our orpiment, and sublimed mercurie,
Our grounden litarge eke on the porphurie,
Of eche of thise of unces a certain
Not helpeth us, our labour is in vain.
Ne, neyther our spirites ascentioun,
Ne our materes that lien al fix adoun,
Mown in our werking nothing us availe;
For lost is all our labour and travaille,

n'estoient pas à *jeu parti* contre les François, v. ii. c. 2, si nous voyons à *jeu parti*. From hence it signifies anything uncertain hazardous. In the old French poetry, the discussion of a prob where much might be said on both sides, was called a *Jeu parti*. *Poesies du Roy de Navarre*, Chanson xlviii. and *Gloss.* in v. See als Cange in v. JOCUS PARTITUS.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] Scales. [2] Stopping with clay.

And all the cost a twenty devil way
Is lost also, which we upon it lay.
  Ther is also ful many another thing,
That is unto our craft apperteining,
Though I by ordre hem nat rehersen can,
Because that I am a lewed[1] man,
Yet wol I telle hem, as they come to minde,
Though I ne cannot set hem in hir kinde,
As bole armoniak, verdegrese, boras;
And sondry vessels made of erthe and glas,
Our urinales, and our descensories,
Viols, croslettes, and sublimatories,
Cucuribtes,[2] and alembikes eke,
And other swiche gere, dere ynough a leke,
What nedeth it for to reherse hem alle?
Wateres rubifying, and bolles galle,
Arsenik, sal armoniak, and brimston?
And herbes coude I tell eke many on,
As egremoine,[3] valerian, and lunarie,[4]
And other swiche, if that me list to tarie;
Our lampes brenning bothe night and day,
To bring about our craft if that we may;
Our fourneis eke of calcination,
And of wateres albification,
Unslekked lime, chalk, and gleire of an ey,[5]
Poudres divers, ashes, dong, pisse, and cley,
Sered[6] pokettes, sal peter, and vitriole;
And divers fires made of wode and cole;
Sal tartre, alcaly, and salt preparat,
And combust materes, and coagulat;
Cley made with hors and mannes here, and oile
Of tartre, alum, glas, berme,[7] wort, and argoile,[8]
Rosalgar,[9] and other materes enbibing;
And eke of our materes encorporing,
And of our silver citrination,
Our cementing, and fermentation,
Our ingottes, testes, and many thinges mo.
  I wol you tell as was me taught also
The foure spirites, and the bodies sevene
By ordre, as oft I herd my lord hem nevene.[10]

[1] Simple, ignorant. [2] Crucibles. [3] Agrimony.
[4] Moon-wort. [5] Glaire, or white of an egg.
[6] Dry. [7] Yeast. [8] Potter's clay.
[9] Red arsenic. [10] Name.

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[10] Name.

The firste spirit quiksilver cleped is;
The second orpiment; the thridde ywis
Sal armoniak, and the fourth brimston.
The bodies sevene eke, lo hem here anon.
Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars iren, Mercurie quiksilver we clepe:
Saturnus led, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus coper, by my fader kin.
This cursed craft who so wol exercise.
He shal no good have, that him may suffice,
For all the good he spendeth theraboute
He lesen shal, therof have I no doute.
Who so that listeth uttren his folie,
Let him come forth and lernen multiplie:
And every man that hath ought in his cofre,
Let him appere, and wex a philosophre,
Ascaunce[1] that craft is so light to lere.
Nay, nay, God wot, al be he monk or frere,
Preest or chanon, or any other wight,
Though he sit at his book both day and night
In lerning of this elvish nice lore,
All is in vain, and parde mochel more
To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee;
Fie, speke not therof, for it wol not be.
And conne he letterure, or conne he non,
As in effect, he shal finde it all on;
For bothe two by my salvation
Concluden in multiplication
Ylike wel, whan they have all ydo;
This is to sain, they faillen bothe two.
Yet forgate I to maken rehersaile
Of waters corosif, and of limaile,[2]
And of bodies mollification,
And also of hir induration,
Oiles, ablusions, metal fusible,
To tellen all, wold passen any bible,
That o wher is; wherfore as for the best
Of all thise names now wol I me rest;
For as I trow, I have you told ynow
To reise a fend, al loke he never so row.
A, nay, let be; the philosophres ston,
Elixer cleped, we seken fast eche on,

[1] See Tyrwhitt's note on vs. 7327. [2] Filings.

For had we him, than were we siker ynow;
But unto God of heven I make avow,
For all our craft, whan we han all ydo,
And all our sleight, he wol not come us to.
He hath ymade us spenden mochel good,
For sorwe of which almost we waxen wood,
But that good hope crepeth in our herte,
Supposing ever, though we sore smerte,
To ben releved of him afterward.
Swiche supposing and hope is sharpe and hard.
I warne you wel it is to seken ever.
That future *temps*[1] hath made men dissever,
In trust therof, from all that ever they had,
Yet of that art they conne not waxen sad,
For unto hem it is a bitter swete;
So semeth it; for ne had they but a shete
Which that they might wrappen hem in a-night,
And a bratt[2] to walken in by day-light,
They wold hem sell, and spend it on this craft;
They conne not stinten, til no thing be laft.
And evermore, wher ever that they gon,
Men may hem kennen by smell of brimston;
For all the world they stinken as a gote;
Hir savour is so rammish and so hote,
That though a man a mile from hem be,
The savour wol enfect him, trusteth me.
Lo, thus by smelling and thred-bare array,
If that men list, this folk they knowen may.
And if a man wol axe hem prively,
Why they be clothed so unthriftily,
They right anon wol rounen[3] in his ere,
And saien, if that they espied were,
Men wolde hem sle, because of hir science:
Lo, thus thise folk betraien innocence.
Passe over this, I go my tale unto.
Er that the pot be on the fire ydo
Of metals with a certain quantitee,
My lord hem tempereth, and no man but he;
(Now he is gon, I dare say boldely)
For as men sain, he can don craftily;
Algate I wote wel he hath swiche a name,
And yet ful oft he renneth in a blame;

[1] Time. [2] Coarse mantle. [3] Whisper.

And wete ye how? ful oft it falleth so,
The pot to-breketh, and farewel all is go.
Thise metales ben of so gret violence,
Our walles may not make hem resistence,
But if they weren wrought of lime and ston;
They percen so, that thurgh the wall they gon;
And som of hem sinke doun into the ground,
(Thus have we lost by times many a pound)
And som are scatered all the flore aboute;
Som lepen into the roof withouten doute.
Though that the fend not in our sight him shewe,
I trow that he be with us, thilke shrewe,
In helle, wher that he is lord and sire,
Ne is ther no more wo, rancour, ne ire.
Whan that our pot is broke, as I have sayde,
Every man chit,[1] and holt him evil apayde.
Som sayd it was long on the fire-making;
Som sayd nay, it was long on the blowing;
(Than was I ferd, for that was min office)
Straw, quod the thridde, ye ben lewed and nice,
It was not tempred as it ought to be.
Nay, quod the fourthe, stint and herken me;
Because our fire was not made of beche,
That is the cause, and other non, so the iche.[2]
I can not tell wheron it was along,
But wel I wot gret strif is us among.
What? quod my lord, ther n'is no more to don,
Of thise perils I wol beware eftsone.
I am right siker,[3] that the pot was crased.[4]
Be as be may, be ye no thing amased.
As usage is, let swepe the flore as swithe;[5]
Plucke up your hertes and be glad and blithe.
The mullok[6] on an hepe ysweped was,
And on the flore ycast a canevas,[7]
And all this mullok in a sive ythrowe,
And sifted, and ypicked many a throwe.[8]
Parde, quod on, somwhat of our metall
Yet is ther here, though that we have not all.
And though this thing mishapped hath as now,
Another time it may be wel ynow.

[1] Chides.
[2] So may I thrive.
[3] Sure.
[4] *Ecrasé*, broken.
[5] Busily, quickly.
[6] Dung, rubbish.
[7] Canvass.
[8] Time.

We mosten put our good in aventure;
A marchant parde may not ay endure,
Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee:
Somtime his good is drenched in the see,
And somtime cometh it sauf unto the lond.
Pees, quod my lord, the next time I wol fond
To bring our craft all in another plite,
And but I do, sires, let me have the wite:
Ther was defaute in somwhat, wel I wote.
Another sayd, the fire was over hote.
But be it hote or cold, I dare say this,
That we concluden ever more amis:
We faille alway of that which we wold have,
And in our madnesse evermore we rave.
And whan we be together everich on,
Every man semeth a Salomon.
But all thing, which that shineth as the gold,
Ne is no gold, as I have herd it told;
Ne every apple that is faire at eye,
Ne is not good, what so men clap or crie.
Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.
He that semeth the wisest by Jesus
Is most fool, whan it cometh to the prefe;
And he that semeth trewest, is a thefe.
That shal ye know, or that I from you wende,
By that I of my tale have made an ende.
Ther was a chanon of religioun
Amonges us, wold enfect all a toun,
Though it as gret were as was Ninive,
Rome, Alisaundre, Troie, or other three.
His sleightes and his infinite falsenesse
Ther coude no man writen, as I gesse,
Though that he mighte live a thousand yere;
In all this world of falsenesse n'is his pere.
For in his termes he wol him so winde,
And speke his wordes in so slie a kinde,
Whan he comunen shal with any wight,
That he wol make him doten anon right,[1]
But it a fend be, as himselven is.
Ful many a man hath he begiled er this,
And wol, if that he may live any while:
And yet men gon and riden many a mile

[1] Make him mad straightway.

Him for to seke, and have his acquaintance,
Not knowing of his false governance.
And if you lust to yeve me audience,
I wol it tellen here in your presence.
But, worshipful Chanons religious,
Ne demeth not that I sclander your hous,
Although that my tale of a Chanon be.
Of every order som shrew is parde:
And God forbede that all a compagnie
Shuld rewe a singuler mannes folie.
To sclander you is no thing min entent,
But to correcten that is mis I ment.
This tale was not only told for you,
But eke for other mo: ye wote wel how
That among Cristes aposteles twelve
Ther was no traitour but Judas himselve:
Than why shuld al the remenant have blame,
That giltles were? by you I say the same.
Save only this, if ye wol herken me,
If any Judas in your covent be,
Remeveth him betimes, I you rede,
If shame or los may causen any drede.
And be no thing displesed I you pray,
But in this cas herkeneth what I say.

In London was a preest, an annuellere,[1]
That therin dwelled hadde many a yere,
Which was so plesant and so servisable
Unto the wif, ther as he was at table,
That she wold suffer him no thing to pay
For borde ne clothing, went he never so gay;
And spending silver had he right ynow:
Therof no force; I wol proceed as now,
And tellen forth my tale of the Chanon,
That broughte this preest to confusion.

[1] They were called *annuellares*, not from their receiving a yearly stipend, as the Gloss. explains it, but from their being employed solely in singing *annuals*, or *anniversary Masses*, for the dead, without any cure of souls. See the Stat. 36 Edw. III. c. viii. where the *Chapelleins Parchiels* are distinguished from others *chantans annuales, et a cure des almes nient entendantz*. They were both to receive yearly stipends, but the former was allowed to take six marks, and the latter only five. Compare Stat. 2. H. V. St. 2. c. 2, where the stipend of the *Chapellein Parochin* is raised to eight marks, and that of the *Chapellein annueler* (he is so named in the statute) to seven.—*Tyrwhitt.*

This false Chanon came upon a day
Unto the preestes chambre, ther he lay,
Beseeching him to lene him a certain[1]
Of gold, and he wold quite it him again.
Lene me a mark, quod he, but dayes three,
And at my day I wol it quiten thee.
And if it so be, that thou finde me false,
Another day hang me up by the halse.[2]
This preest him toke a marke, and that as swith,
And this Chanon him thanked often sith,
And toke his leve, and wente forth his wey:
And at the thridde day brought his money;
And to the preest he toke his gold again,
Wherof this preest was wonder glad and fain.
Certes, quod he, nothing anoieth me
To lene a man a noble, or two, or three,
Or what thing were in my possession,
Whan he so trewe is of condition,
That in no wise he breken wol his day:
To swiche a man I can never say nay.
What? quod this Chanon, shuld I be untrewe?
Nay, that were thing fallen al of the newe.
Trouth is a thing that I wol ever kepe
Unto the day in which that I shal crepe
Into my grave, and elles God forbede:
Beleveth this as siker[3] as your crede.
God thanke I, and in good time be it sayde,
That ther n'as never man yet evil apayde
For gold ne silver that he to me lent,
Ne never falshede in min herte I ment.
And, sire, (quod he) now of my privetee,
Sin ye so goodlich have ben unto me,
And kithed[4] to me so gret gentillesse,
Somwhat, to quiten with your kindenesse,
I wol you shewe, and if you lust to lere
I wol you techen pleinly the manere,
How I can werken in philosophie.
Taketh good heed, ye shuln wel sen at eye,
That I wol do a maistrie or I go.
Ye? quod the preest, ye, sire, and wol ye so?
Mary therof I pray you hertily.
At your commandement, sire, trewely,

[1] *I. e.*, a certain sum. [2] Neck.
[3] Surely. [4] Shewn.

Quod the Chanon, and elles God forbede.
Lo, how this thefe coude his service bede.[1]
Ful soth it is that swiche profered service
Stinketh, as witnessen thise olde wise;
And that ful sone I wol it verifie
In this Chanon, rote of all trecherie,
That evermore delight hath and gladnesse
(Swiche fendly thoughtes in his herte empresse)
How Cristes peple he may to meschief bring.
God kepe us from his false dissimuling.
Nought wiste this preest with whom that he delt,
Ne of his harme coming nothing he felt.
O sely preest, o sely innocent,
With covetise anon thou shalt be blent;
O graceles, ful blind is thy conceite,
For nothing art thou ware of the disceite,
Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee;
His wily wrenches thou ne mayst not flee.
Wherfore to go to the conclusion
That referreth to thy confusion,
Unhappy man, anon I wol me hie
To tellen thin unwit and thy folie,
And eke the falsenesse of that other wretch,
As ferforth as that my conning wol stretch.
This Chanon was my lord, ye wolden wene;
Sire hoste, in faith, and by the heven quene,
It was another Chanon, and not he,
That can an hundred part more subtiltee.
He hath betraied folkes many a time;
Of his falsenesse it dulleth me to rime.
Ever whan that I speke of his falshede
For shame of him my chekes waxen rede;
Algates they beginnen for to glowe,
For rednesse have I non, right wel I knowe,
In my visage, for fumes diverse
Of metals, which ye have herd me reherse,
Consumed han and wasted my rednesse.
Now take hede of this Chanons cursednesse.
Sire, quod the Chanon, let your yeman gon
For quiksilver, that we it had anon;
And let him bringen unces two or three;
And whan he cometh, as faste shul ye see

[1] Offer.

A wonder thing, which ye saw never er this.
Sire, quod the preest, it shal be don ywis.
He bad his servant fetchen him this thing,
And he al redy was at his bidding,
And went him forth, and came anon again
With this quiksilver, shortly for to sain,
And toke thise unces three to the Chanoun;
And he hem laide wel and faire adoun,
And bad the servant coles for to bring,
That he anon might go to his werking.
The coles right anon weren yfet,
And this Chanon toke out a crosselet
Of his bosome, and shewed it to the preest.
This instrument, quod he, which that thou seest,
Take in thyn hond, and put thyself therin
Of this quiksilver an unce, and here begin
In the name of Crist to wex a philosophre.
Ther be ful fewe, which that I wolde profre
To shewen hem thus muche of my science:
For here shul ye see by experience,
That this quiksilver I wol mortifie,
Right in your sight anon withouten lie,
And make it as good silver and as fine,
As ther is any in your purse or mine,
Or elles wher; and make it malliable;
And elles holdeth me false and unable
Amonges folk for ever to appere.
I have a pouder here that cost me dere,
Shal make all good, for it is cause of all
My conning, which that I you shewen shall.
Voideth your man, and let him be therout;
And shet the dore, while we ben about
Our privetee, that no man us espie,
While that we werke in this philosophie.
All, as he bade, fulfilled was in dede.
This ilke servant anon right out yede,
And his maister shette the dore anon,
And to hir labour spedily they gon.
This preest at this cursed Chanons bidding,
Upon the fire anon he set this thing,
And blew the fire, and besied him ful fast.
And this Chanon into the crosselet[1] cast

[1] Crucible.

A pouder, n'ot I never wherof it was
Ymade, other of chalk, other of glas,
Or somwhat elles, was not worth a flie,
To blinden with this preest; and bade him hie
The coles for to couchen all above
The crosselet; for in tokening I thee love
(Quod this Chanon) thine owen hondes two
Shal werken all thing which that here is do.
Grand mercy, quod the preest, and was ful glad,
And couched[1] the coles as the Chanon bad.
And while he besy was, this fendly wretch,
This false Chanon (the foule fend him fetch)
Out of his bosom toke a bechen cole,
In which ful subtilly was made an hole,
And therin put was of silver limaile[2]
An unce, and stopped was withouten faile
The hole with wax, to kepe the limaile in.
And understandeth, that this false gin
Was not made ther, but it was made before;
And other thinges I shal tell you more
Hereafterward, which that he with him brought;
Er he came ther, him to begile he thought,
And so he did, or that they went atwin:
Til he had torned him, coud he not blin.[3]
It dulleth me, whan that I of him speke;
On his falshede fain wold I me awreke,
If I wist how, but he is here and ther,
He is so variaunt, he abit no wher.
But taketh hede, sires, now for Goddes love.
He toke his cole, of which I spake above,
And in his hond he bare it prively,
And whiles the preest couched besily
The coles, as I tolde you er this,
This Chanon sayde; frend, ye don amis;
This is not couched as it ought to be,
But sone I shal amenden it, quod he.
Now let me meddle therwith but a while,
For of you have I pitee by Seint Gile.
Ye ben right hot, I see wel how ye swete;
Have here a cloth and wipe away the wete.
And whiles that the preest wiped his face,
This Chanon toke his cole, with sory grace,

[1] Laid. [2] Filings. [3] Cease.

And laied it above on the midward
Of the crosselet, and blew wel afterward,
Til that the coles gonnen fast to bren.
Now yeve us drinke, quod this Chanon then,
As swithe all shal be wel, I undertake.
Sitte we doun, and let us mery make.
And whanne that this Chanones bechen cole
Was brent, all the limaile out of the hole
Into the crosselet anon fell adoun;
And so it muste nedes by resoun,
Sin it above so even couched was;
But therof wist the preest nothing, alas!
He demed all the coles ylike good,
For of the sleight he nothing understood.
And whan this Alkymistre saw his time,
Riseth up, sire preest, quod he, and stondeth by me;
And for I wote wel ingot have ye non,
Goth, walketh forth, and bringeth a chalk ston;
For I wol make it of the same shap,
That is an ingot, if I may have hap.
Bring eke with you a bolle[1] or elles a panne
Ful of water, and ye shul wel see thanne
How that our besinesse shal thrive and preve.
And yet, for ye shul have no misbeleve
No wrong conceit of me in your absence,
I ne wol not ben out of your presence,
But go with you, and come with you again.
The chambre dore, shortly for to sain,
They opened and shet, and went hir wey,
And forth with hem they caried the key,
And camen again withouten any delay.
What shuld I tarien all the longe day?
He toke the chalk, and shope it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I shal you devise;
I say, he toke out of his owen sleve
A teine[2] of silver (yvel mote he cheve[3])
Which that ne was but a just unce of weight.
And taketh heed now of his cursed sleight;
He shop his ingot, in length and in brede
Of thilke teine, withouten any drede,
So slily, that the preest it not espide;
And in his sleve again he gan it hide;

[1] Bowl. [2] A thin plate. [3] May evil be his.

And from the fire he toke up his matere,
And in the ingot it put with mery chere:
And in the water-vessel he it cast,
Whan that him list, and bad the preest as fast,
Loke what ther is; put in thin hond and grope;
Thou shalt ther finden silver as I hope.
What, divel of helle! shuld it elles be?
Shaving of silver, silver is parde.
He put his hond in, and toke up a teine
Of silver fine, and glad in every veine
Was this preest, whan he saw that it was so.
Goddes blessing, and his mothers also,
And alle Halwes, have ye, sire Chanon,
Sayde this preest, and I hir malison,
But, and ye vouchesauf to techen me
This noble craft and this subtilitee,
I wol be your in all that ever I may.
Quod the Chanon, yet wol I make assay
The second time, that ye mow taken hede,
And ben expert of this, and in your nede
Another day assay in min absence
This discipline, and this crafty science.
Let take another unce, quod he tho,
Of quiksilver, withouten wordes mo,
And do therwith as ye have don er this
With that other, which that now silver is.
The preest him besieth all that ever he can
To don as this Chanon, this cursed man,
Commandeth him, and faste blewe the fire,
For to come to the effect of his desire.
And this Chanon right in the mene while
Al redy was this preest eft[1] to begile,
And for a countenance in his hond bare
An holow stikke, (take kepe and beware)
In the ende of which an unce and no more
Of silver limaile put was, as before
Was in his cole, and stopped with wax wel
For to kepe in his limaile every del.
And while this preest was in his besinesse,
This Chanon with his stikke gan him dresse
To him anon, and his pouder cast in,
As he did erst, (the devil out of his skin

Again.

Him torne, I pray to God, for his falshede,
For he was ever false in thought and dede)
And with his stikke, above the crosselet,
That was ordained with that false get,
He stirreth the coles, til relenten[1] gan
The wax again the fire, as every man,
But he a fool be, wote wel it mote nede
And all that in the stikke was out yede,
And in the crosselet hastily it fell.
Now, goode sires, what wol ye bet than wel?
Whan that this preest was thus begiled again,
Supposing nought but trouthe, soth to sain,
He was so glad, that I can not expresse
In no manere his mirth and his gladnesse,
And to the Chanon he profered eftsone
Body and good: ye, quod the Chanon, sone,
Though poure I be, crafty thou shalt me finde:
I warne thee wel, yet is ther more behinde.
Is ther any coper here within? sayd he.
Ye, sire, quod the preest, I trow ther be.
Elles go beie us som, and that as swithe.
Now, goode sire, go forth thy way and hie the.
He went his way, and with the coper he came,
And this Chanon it in his hondes name,
And of that coper weyed out an unce.
To simple is my tonge to pronounce,
As minister of my wit, the doublenesse
Of this Chanon, rote of all cursednesse.
He semed frendly, to hem that knew him nought,
But he was fendly, both in werk and thought.
It werieth me to tell of his falsenesse;
And natheles yet wol I it expresse,
To that entent men may beware therby,
And for non other cause trewely.
He put this coper into the crosselet,
And on the fire as swithe he hath it set,
And cast in pouder, and made the preest to blow,
And in his werking for to stoupen low,
As he did erst, and all n'as but a jape;
Right as him list the preest he made his ape.
And afterward in the ingot he it cast,
And in the panne put it at the last

Melt.

Of water, and in he put his owen hond;
And in his sleve, as ye beforen hond
Herde me tell, he had a silver teine;
He slily toke it out, this cursed heine,
(Unweting this preest of his false craft)
And in the pannes botome he it laft.
And in the water rombleth to and fro,
And wonder prively toke up also
The coper teine, (not knowing thilke preest)
And hid it, and him hente by the brest,
And to him spake, and thus said in his game;
Stoupeth adoun; by God ye be to blame;
Helpeth me now, as I did you whilere;
Put in your hond, and loketh what is there.
This preest toke up this silver teine anon;
And thanne said the Chanon, let us gon
With thise three teines which that we han wrought
To som goldsmith, and wete if they ben ought:
For by my faith I n'olde for my hood
But if they weren silver fine and good,
And that as swithe wel preved shal it be.
Unto the goldsmith with thise teines three
They went anon, and put hem in assay
To fire and hammer: might no man say nay,
But that they weren as hem ought to be.
This soted preest, who was gladder than he?
Was never brid gladder agains the day,
Ne nightingale in the seson of May
Was never non, that list better to sing,
Ne lady lustier in carolling,
Or for to speke of love and womanhede,
Ne knight in armes don a hardy dede
To stonden in grace of his lady dere,
Than hadde this preest this craft for to lere;
And to the Chanon thus he spake and seid;
For the love of God, that for us alle deied,
And as I may deserve it unto you,
What shal this receit cost? telleth me now.
By our lady, quod this Chanon, it is dere.
I warne you wel, that, save I and a frere,
In Englelond ther can no man it make.
No force, quod he; now, sire, for Goddes sake,
What shall I pay? telleth me, I you pray.
Ywis, quod he, it is ful dere I say.

Sire, at o word, if that you list it have,
Ye shal pay fourty pound, so God me save;
And n'ere the frendship that ye did er this
To me, ye shulden payen more ywis.
This preest the sum of fourty pound anon
Of nobles fet, and toke hem everich on
To this Chanon, for this ilke receit.
All his werking n'as but fraud and deceit.
Sire preest, he said, I kepe for to have no loos
Of my craft, for I wold it were kept cloos;
And as ye love me, kepeth it secree:
For if men knewen all my subtiltee,
By God they wolden have so gret envie
To me, because of my philosophie,
I shuld be ded, ther were non other way.
God it forbede, quod the preest, what ye say.
Yet had I lever spenden all the good
Which that I have, (and elles were I wood)
Than that ye shuld fallen in swiche meschefe.
For your good will, sire, have ye right good prefe,
Quod the Chanon, and farewel, *grand mercy*.
He went his way. and never the preest him sey
After that day: and whan that this preest shold
Maken assay, at swiche time as he wold,
Of this receit, farewel, it n'olde not be
Lo, thus bejaped and begiled was he;
Thus maketh he his introduction
To bringen folk to hir destruction.
Considereth, sires, how that in eche estate
Betwixen men and gold ther is debat,
So ferforth that unnethes is ther non.
This multiplying so blint many on,
That in good faith I trowe that it be
The cause gretest of swiche scarsitee.
Thise philosophres speke so mistily
In this craft, that men cannot come therby,
For any wit that men have now adayes.
They mow wel chateren, as don thise jayes,
And in hir termes set hir lust and peine,
But to hir purpos shul they never atteine.
A man may lightly lerne, if he have ought,
To multiplie, and bring his good to nought.
Lo, swiche a lucre is in this lusty game;
A mannes mirth it wol turne al to grame,[1]

[1] Grief.

And emptien also gret and hevy purses,
And maken folk for to purchasen curses
Of hem, that han therto hir good ylent.
O, fy for shame, they that han be brent,
Alas! can they not flee the fires hete?
Ye that it use, I rede that ye it lete,
Lest ye lese all; for bet than never is late:
Never to thriven, were to long a date.
Though ye prolle[1] ay, ye shul it never find:
Ye ben as bold as is Bayard the blind,[2]
That blondereth forth, and peril casteth non:
He is as bold to renne agains a ston,
As for to go besides in the way:
So faren ye that multiplien, I say.
If that your eyen cannot seen aright,
Loketh that youre mind lacke not his sight.
For though ye loke never so brode and stare,
Ye shul not win a mite on that chaffare,
But wasten all that ye may rape and renne.
Withdraw the fire, lest it to faste brenne;
Medleth no more with that art, I mene;
For if ye don, your thrift is gon ful clene.
And right as swithe I wol you tellen here
What philosophres sain in this matere.
  Lo, thus saith Arnolde of the newe toun,
As his Rosarie maketh mentioun,
He saith right thus, withouten any lie;
Ther may no man Mercurie mortifie,
But it be with his brothers knowleching.
  Lo, how that he, which firste said this thing,
Of philosophres father was Hermes:
He saith, how that the dragon douteles
Ne dieth not, but if that he be slain
With his brother. And this is for to sain,
By the dragon Mercury, and non other,
He understood, and brimstone by his brother,
That out of Sol and Luna were ydrawe.
  And therfore, said he, take heed to my sawe.
Let no man besie him this art to seche,
But if that he the entention and speche
Of philosophres understonden can;
And if he do, he is a lewed man.

[1] Prowl, hunt about. [2] *I.e.*, a blind horse.

For this science and this conning (quod he)
Is of the secree of secrees[1] parde.
Also ther was a disciple of Plato,
That on a time said his maister to,
As his book Senior[2] wol bere witnesse,
And this was his demand in sothfastnesse:
Telle me the name of thilke privee ston.
And Plato answerd unto him anon;
Take the ston that Titanos men name.
Which is that? quod he. Magnetia is the same,
Saide Plato. Ye, sire, and is it thus?
This is *ignotum per ignotius.*
What is Magnetia, good sire, I pray?
It is a water that is made, I say,
Of the elementes foure, quod Plato.
Tell me the rote, good sire, quod he tho,
Of that water, if that it be your will.
Nay, nay, quod Plato, certain that I n'ill.
The philosophres were sworne everich on,
That they ne shuld discover it unto non,
Ne in no book it write in no manere;
For unto God it is so lefe and dere,
That he wol not that it discovered be,
But wher it liketh to his deitee
Man for to enspire, and eke for to defende
Whom that him liketh; lo, this is the ende.

[1] He alludes to a treatise, entitled, *Secreta Secretorum*, which was supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander. See Fabric. Bibl. Gr. v. ii. p. 167. It was very popular in the middle ages. Ægidius de Columnâ, a famous divine and bishop, about the latter end of the XIIIth century, built upon it his book *De Regimine principum*, of which our Occleve made a free translation in English verse, and addressed it to Henry V., while Prince of Wales. A part of Lydgate's translation of the *Secreta Secretorum* is printed in Ashmole's *Theat Chem. Brit.* p. 397. He did not translate more than about half of it, being prevented by death. See MS. *Harl.* 2251, and Tanner, *Bib. Brit.* in v. LYDGATE. The greatest part of the VIIth Book of Gower's *Conf. Amant.* is taken from this supposed work of Aristotle.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] The book alluded to is printed in the *Theatrum Chemicum*, vol. v., p. 219, under this title, "Senioris Zadith fil. Hamuelis tabula Chymica." The story which follows of Plato and his disciple is there told (p. 249), with some variations, of Salomon. "Dixit *Salomon* rex, Recipe lapidem qui dicitur *Thitarios*—Dixit sapiens, Assigna mihi illum. Dixit, est corpus *magnesia*—Dixit, quid est *magnesia?* Respondit, *magnesia* est *aqua*, composita," &c.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Than this conclude I, sin that God of heven
Ne wol not that the philosophres neven,
How that a man shal come unto this ston,
I rede as for the best to let it gon.
For who so maketh God his adversary,
As for to werken any thing in contrary
Of his will, certes never shal he thrive,
Though that he multiply terme of his live.
And ther a point; for ended is my tale.
God send every good man bote of his bale.[1]

[1] Help for his evil or trouble.

THE MANCIPLES PROLOGUE.

16950–16977.

WETE ye not wher stondeth a litel toun,
Which that ycleped is Bob up and doun,[1]
Under the blee,[2] in Canterbury way?
Ther gan our hoste to jape and to play,
And sayde; sires, what? Dun is in the mire.[3]
Is ther no man for praiere ne for hire,
That wol awaken our felaw behind?
A thefe him might ful lightly rob and bind.
See how he nappeth, see, for cockes bones,
As he wold fallen from his hors atones.
Is that a coke of London, with meschance?
Do him come forth, he knoweth his penance;
For he shal tell a tale by my fey,
Although it be not worth a botel hey.
Awake thou coke, quod he, God yeve thee sorwe,
What aileth thee to slepen by the morwe?[4]
Hast thou had fleen[5] al night, or art thou dronke?
Or hast thou with som quene al night yswonke,
So that thou mayst not holden up thin hed?
This coke, that was ful pale and nothing red,
Sayd to our hoste; so God my soule blesse,
As ther is falle on me swiche hevinesse,
N'ot I nat why, that me were lever to slepe,
Than the best gallon wine that is in Chepe.
Wel, quod the Manciple, if it may don ese
To thee, sire Coke, and to no wight displese,
Which that here rideth in this compagnie,
And that our hoste wol of his curtesie,

[1] Not marked in ordinary maps. [2] A forest in Kent.
[3] There is a proverbial saying: "As dull as Dun in the mire."
[4] This must be understood generally for *the day time;* as it was then afternoon. It has been observed in the Discourse, etc., § xiii., that, in this episode of the Coke, no notice is taken of his having told a tale before.—*Tyrwhitt.* [5] Fleas.

I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale;
For in good faith thy visage is ful pale:
Thin eyen dasen,[1] sothly as me thinketh,
And wel I wot, thy breth ful soure stinketh,
That sheweth wel thou art not wel disposed:
Of me certain thou shalt not ben yglosed.
See how he gapeth,[2] lo, this dronken wight,
As though he wold us swalow anon right.
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father kin:
The devil of helle set his foot therin!
Thy cursed breth enfecten woll us alle:
Fy stinking swine, fy, foul mote thee befalla.
A, taketh heed, sires, of this lusty man.
Now, swete sire, wol ye just at the fan?[3]
Therto, me thinketh, ye be wel yshape.
I trow that ye have dronken win of ape,[4]
And that is whan men playen with a straw.
And with this speche the coke waxed all wraw,
And on the Manciple he gan nod fast
For lacke of speche; and doun his hors him cast,
Wher as he lay, til that men him up toke.
This was a faire chivachee of a coke:
Alas that he ne had hold him by his ladel!
And er that he agen were in the sadel,
Ther was gret shoving bothe to and fro
To lift him up, and mochel care and wo,

[1] Dim. [2] Gapeth. [3] *I. e.*, Will you tilt.

[4] The explanation in the Gloss. of this and the preceding passage from Mr. Speght, is too ridiculous to be repeated. *Wine of ape* I understand to mean the same as *vin de singe* in the old *Calendrier des Bergers*, Sign. L ii. b. The author is treating of Physiognomy, and in his description of the four temperaments he mentions, among other circumstances, the different effects of wine upon them. The Cholerick, he says, *a vin de Lyon; cest a dire, quant a bien beu veult tanser voyre battre.*—The Sanguine, *a vin de Singe; quant a plus beu tant est plus joyeux.*—In the same manner the Phlegmatic is said to have *vin de mouton*, and the Melancholick *vin de porceau*.

I find the same four animals applied to illustrate the effects of wine in a little Rabbinical tradition, which I shall transcribe here from Fabric. Cod. Pseudepig. V. T. vol. i. p. 275. *Vinum plantanti Noacho Satanam se junxisse memorant, qui, dum Noa vites plantaret, mactaverit ante illas* ovem, leonem, simiam, *et* suem: *Quod principio potûs vini homo sit instar* ovis, *vinum sumptum efficiat ex homine* leonem, *largius hausta mutet eum in saltantem* simiam, *ad ebrietatem infusum transformet illum in* volutatum *et prostratum* suem. See also *Gesta Romanorum*, c. 159, where a story of the same purport is quoted from Josephus, *in libro de causis rerum naturalium.*—*Tyrwhitt.*

So unweldy was this sely palled gost:
And to the Manciple than spake our host.
Because that drinke hath domination
Upon this man, by my salvation
I trow he lewedly wol tell his tale.
For were it win, or old or moisty ale,
That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,
And sneseth fast, and eke he hath the pose.[1]
He also hath to don more than ynough
To kepe him on his capel out of the slough:
And if he falle from of his capel eftsone,
Than shul we alle have ynough to done
In lifting up his hevy dronken cors.
Tell on thy tale, of him make I no force.
But yet, Manciple, in faith thou art to nice,
Thus openly to repreve him of his vice:
Another day he wol paraventure
Recleimen thee, and bring thee to the lure:
I mene, he speken wol of smale thinges,
As for to pinchen at thy rekeninges,
That were not honest, if it came to prefe.
Quod the Manciple, that were a gret meschefe:
So might he lightly bring me in the snare.
Yet had I lever payen for the mare,
Which he rit on, than he shuld with me strive.
I wol not wrathen him, so mote I thrive;
That that I spake, I sayd it in my bourd.[2]
And wete ye what? I have here in my gourd
A draught of win, ye of a ripe grape,
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.
This coke shal drinke therof, if that I may;
Up peine of my lif he wol not say nay.
And certainly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessell the coke dranke fast, (alas!
What nedeth it? he dranke ynough beforne)
And whan he hadde pouped in his horne,
To the Manciple he toke the gourd again.
And of that drinke the coke was wonder fain,
And thonked him in swiche wise as he coude.
Than gan our hoste to laughen wonder loude,
And sayd; I see wel it is necessary
Wher that we gon good drinke with us to cary;

[1] Rheum, catarrh. [2] In jest.

For that wol turnen rancour and disese
To accord and love, and many a wrong apese.
O Bacchus, Bacchus, blessed be thy name,
That so canst turnen ernest into game;
Worship and thonke be to thy deitee.
Of that matere ye get no more of me.
Tell on thy tale, Manciple, I thee pray.
Wel, sire, quod he, now herkeneth what I say.

The Manciples Tale.

Whan Phebus dwelled here in erth adonn,
As olde bookes maken mentioun,
He was the moste lusty bacheler
Of all this world, and eke the best archer.
He slow Phiton the serpent, as he lay
Sleping agains the sonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bow wrought, as men mowen rede.
Playen he coude on every minstralcie,
And singen, that it was a melodie
To heren of his clere vois the soun.
Certes the king of Thebes, Amphioun,
That with his singing walled the citee,
Coud never singen half so wel as he.
Therto he was the semelieste man,
That is or was, sithen the world began;
What nedeth it his feture to descrive?
For in this world n'is non so faire on live.
He was therwith fulfilled of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of parfite worthinesse.
This Phebus, that was flour of bachelerie,
As wel in fredom, as in chivalrie,
For his disport, in signe eke of victorie
Of Phiton, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to beren in his hond a bowe.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taught it speken, as men teche a jay.

Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,
And contrefete the speche of every man
He coude, whan he shulde tell a tale.
Therwith in all this world no nightingale
Ne coude by an hundred thousand del
Singen so wonder merily and wel.
Now had this Phebus in his hous a wif,
Which that he loved more than his lif,
And night and day did ever his diligence
Hire for to plese, and don hire reverence:
Save only, if that I the soth shal sain,
Jelous he was, and wold have kept hire fain,
For him were loth yjaped for to be;
And so is every wight in swiche degree;
But all for nought, for it availeth nought.
A good wif, that is clene of werk and thought,
Shuld not be kept in non await certain:
And trewely the labour is in vain
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol not be.
This hold I for a veray nicetee,
To spillen[1] labour for to kepen wives;
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lives.
But now to purpos, as I first began.
This worthy Phebus doth all that he can
To plesen hire, wening thurgh swiche plesance,
And for his manhood and his governance,
That no man shulde put him from hire grace:
But God it wote, ther may no man embrace
As to destreine a thing, which that nature
Hath naturelly set in a creature.
Take any brid, and put it in a cage,
And do all thin entente, and thy corage,
To foster it tendrely with mete and drinke
Of alle deintees that thou canst bethinke,
And kepe it al so clenely as thou may;
Although the cage of gold be never so gay,
Yet had this brid, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever in a forest, that is wilde and cold,
Gon eten wormes, and swiche wretchednesse.
For ever this brid will don his besinesse
To escape out of his cage whan that he may:
His libertee the brid desireth ay.

[1] Waste.

[illegible]

And [illegible]
And [illegible]
And [illegible]
And [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[

But, for the gentil is in estat above,
She shal be cleped his lady and his love;
And, for that other is a poure woman,
She shal be cleped his wenche and his lemman:
And God it wote, min owen dere brother,
Men lay as low that on as lith that other.
Right so betwix a titeles tiraunt
And an outlawe, or elles a thefe erraunt,
The same I say, ther is no difference,
(To Alexander told was this sentence)
But, for the tyrant is of greter might
By force of meinie for to sle doun right,
And brennen hous and home, and make all plain,
Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitain;
And, for the outlawe hath but smale meinie,
And may not do so gret an harme as he,
Ne bring a contree to so gret meschiefe,
Men clepen him an outlawe or a thefe.
But, for I am a man not textuel,
I wol not tell of textes never a del;
I wol go to my tale, as I began.
Whan Phebus wif had sent for hire lemman,
Anon they wroughten all hir lust volage.
This white crowe, that heng ay in the cage,
Beheld hir werke, and sayde never a word:
And whan that home was come Phebus the lord,
This crowe song, cuckow, cuckow, cuckow. [now?
What? brid, quod Phebus, what song singest thou
Ne were thou wont so merily to sing,
That to my herte it was a rejoysing
To here thy vois? alas! what song is this?
By God, quod he, I singe not amis.
Phebus, (quod he) for all thy worthinesse,
For all thy beautee, and all thy gentillesse,
For all thy song, and all thy minstralcie,
For all thy waiting, blered is thin eye,
With on of litel reputation,
Not worth to thee as in comparison
The mountance[1] of a gnat, so mote I thrive;
For on thy bedde thy wif I saw him swive.
What wol you more? the crowe anon him told,
By sade tokenes, and by wordes bold,

[1] Value.

How that his wif had don hire lecherie
Him to gret shame, and to gret vilanie;
And told him oft, he sawe it with his eyen.
This Phebus gan awayward for to wrien;
Him thought his woful herte brast atwo.
His bowe he bent, and set therin a flo;[1]
And in his ire he hath his wif yslain:
This is the effect, ther is no more to sain.
For sorwe of which he brake his minstralcie,
Both harpe and lute, giterne, and sautrie;
And eke he brake his arwes, and his bowe;
And after that thus spake he to the crowe.
Traitour, quod he, with tonge of scorpion,
Thou hast me brought to my confusion:
Alas that I was wrought! why n'ere I dede?
O dere wif, o gemme of lustyhede,
That were to me so sade, and eke so trewe,
Now liest thou ded, with face pale of hewe,
Ful gilteles, that durst I swere ywis.
O rakel hond, to do so foule a mis.
O troubled wit, o ire reccheles,
That unavised smitest gilteles.
O wantrust, ful of false suspecion,
Wher was thy wit and thy discretion?
O, every man beware of rakelnesse,
Ne trowe no thing withouten strong witnesse.
Smite not to sone, er that ye weten why,
And beth avised wel and sikerly,
Or ye do any execution
Upon your ire for suspecion.
Alas! a thousand folk hath rakel ire
Fully fordon,[2] and brought hem in the mire.
Alas! for sorwe I wol myselven sle.
And to the crowe, o false thefe, said he,
I wol thee quite anon thy false tale.
Thou song whilom, like any nightingale,
Now shalt thou, false thefe, thy song forgon,
And eke thy white fethers everich on,
Ne never in all thy lif ne shalt thou speke;
Thus shul men on a traitour ben awreke.
Thou and thin ofspring ever shul be blake,
Ne never swete noise shul ye make,

[1] An arrow. [2] Undone.

But ever crie ageins tempest and rain,
In token, that thurgh thee my wif is slain.
And to the crowe he stert, and that anon,
And pulled his white fethers everich on,
And made him blak, and raft him all his song
And eke his speche, and out at dore him flong
Unto the devil, which I him betake;
And for this cause ben alle crowes blake.
Lordings, by this ensample, I you pray,
Beth ware, and taketh kepe what that ye say;
Ne telleth never man in all your lif,
How that another man hath dight his wif;
He wol you haten mortally certain.
Dan Salomon, as wise clerkes sain,
Techeth a man to kepe his tonge wel;
But as I sayd, I am not textuel.
But natheles thus taughte me my dame;
My sone, thinke on the crowe a Goddes name.
My sone, kepe wel thy tonge, and kepe thy frend
A wicked tonge is werse than a fend:
My sone, from a fende men may hem blesse.
My sone, God of his endeles goodnesse
Walled a tonge with teeth, and lippes eke,
For man shuld him avisen what he speke.
My sone, ful often for to mochel speche
Hath many a man ben spilt, as clerkes teche;
But for a litel speche avisedly
Is no man shent, to speken generally.
My sone, thy tonge shuldest thou restreine
At alle time, but whan thou dost thy peine
To speke of God in honour and prayere.
The firste vertue, sone, if thou wolt lere,
Is to restreine, and kepen wel thy tonge;
Thus leren children, whan that they be yonge.
My sone, of mochel speking evil avised,
Ther lesse speking had ynough suffised,
Cometh mochel harme; thus was me told and taught;
In mochel speche sinne wanteth naught.
Wost thou wherof a rakel tonge serveth?
Right as a swerd forcutteth and forkerveth
An arme atwo, my dere sone, right so
A tonge cutteth frendship all atwo.
A jangler is to God abhominable.
Rede Salomon, so wise and honourable,

Rede David in his Psalmes, rede Senek.
My sone, speke not, but with thyn hed thou beck,
Dissimule as thou were defe, if that thou here
A janglour speke of perilous matere.
The Fleming sayth, and lerne if that thee lest,
That litel jangling causeth mochel rest.
My sone, if thou no wicked word hast said,
Thee thar not dreden for to be bewraid;
But he that hath missayd, I dare wel sain,
He may by no way clepe his word again.[1]
Thing that is sayd is sayd, and forth it goth,
Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
He is his thral, to whom that he hath sayd
A tale, of which he is now evil apaid.
My sone, beware, and be non auctour newe
Of tidings, whether they ben false or trewe;
Wher so thou come, amonges high or lowe,
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thinke upon the crowe.

[1] Recall what he has said.

THE PERSONES PROLOGUE.

17312–17341.

By that the Manciple had his tale ended,
The sonne fro the south line was descended
So lowe, that it ne was not to my sight
Degrees nine and twenty as of hight.[1]
Foure of the clok it was tho, as I gesse,
For enleven foot, a litel more or lesse,
My shadow was at thilke time, as there,
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In six feet equal of proportion.
Therwith the mones exaltation,
In mene Libra, alway gan ascende,
As we were entring at the thorpes[2] ende.
For which our hoste, as he was wont to gie,
As in this cas, our jolly compagnie,
Said in this wise; lordings, everich on,
Now lacketh us no tales mo than on.
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;
I trowe that we han herd of eche degree.
Almost fulfilled is myn ordinance;
I pray to God so yeve him right good chance,
That telleth us this tale lustily.
Sire preest, quod he, art thou a vicary?[3]
Or art thou a Person? say soth by thy fay.
Be what thou be, ne breke thou not our play;
For every man, save thou, hath told his tale.
Unbokel, and shew us what is in thy male.[4]
For trewely me thinketh by thy chere,
Thou shuldest knitte up wel a gret matere.
Tell us a fable anon, for cockes bones.[5]
This Person him answered al at ones;

[1] See Tyrwhitt's notes.
[2] Village.
[3] A vicar.
[4] Wallet.
[5] The corruption of a familiar oath, which is more openly expressed in vs. 12629.

Thou getest fable non ytold for me,
For Poule, that writeth unto Timothe,
Repreveth hem that weiven sothfastnesse,
And tellen fables, and swiche wretchednesse.
Why shuld I sowen draf out of my fist,
Whan I may sowen whete, if that me list?
For which I say, if that you list to here
Moralitee, and vertuous matere,
And than that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wold ful fain at Cristes reverence
Don you plesance leful, as I can.
But trusteth wel, I am a sotherne man,
I cannot geste, rom, ram, ruf,[1] by my letter,
And, God wote, rime hold I but litel better.
And therfore if you list, I wol not glose,
I wol you tell a litel tale in prose,

[1] This is plainly a contemptuous manner of describing *alliterative poetry*; and the Person's prefatory declaration that "he is a Southern man," would lead one to imagine that compositions in that style were at this time, chiefly confined to the Northern provinces. It was observed long ago by William of Malmesbury, l. iii. *Pontif. Angl.*, that the language of the North of England was so harsh and unpolished, as to be scarce intelligible to a Southern man. From the same causes we may presume, that it was often long before the improvements in the poetical art, which from time to time were made in the South, could find their way into the North; so that there the hobbling alliterative verse might still be in the highest request, even after Chaucer had established the use of the heroic metre in this part of the island. Dr Percy has quoted an alliterative poem by a Cheshire man on the battle of Flodden in 1513, and he has remarked "that all such poets as use this kind of metre, retained along with it many peculiar Saxon idioms." Essay on Metre of P. P. This may perhaps have been owing to their being generally inhabitants of the Northern counties, where the old Saxon idiom underwent much fewer and slower alterations than it did in the neighbourhood of the capital.

To geste here is *to relate gestes*. In ver. 13861 he has called it *to tell in geste*. Both passages seem to imply that *Gestes* were chiefly written in alliterative verse, but the latter passage more strongly than the former. After the Host has told Chaucer, that he "shall no longer *rime*," he goes on—

"Let see wher thou canst tellen ought *in gamo*,
Or tellen *in prose* somewhat at the leste"—

Geste there seems to be put for a species of composition which was neither *Rime* nor *Prose*; and what that could be, except *alliterative metre*, I cannot guess. At the same time I must own, that I know no other passage which authorizes the interpretation of *Geste* in this confined sense.—*Tyrwhitt.*

To knitte up all this feste, and make an ende
And Jesu for his grace wit me sende
To shewen you the way in this viage
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrimage,
That hight Jerusalem celestial.
And if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal
Beginne upon my tale, for which I pray
Tell your avis, I can no better say.
But natheles this meditation
I put it ay under correction
Of clerkes, for I am not textuel;
I take but the sentence, trusteth me we..
Therfore I make a protestation,
That I wol standen to correction.
Upon this word we han assented sone:
For, as us semed, it was for to don,
To enden in som vertuous sentence,
And for to yeve him space and audience;
And bade our hoste he shulde to him say,
That alle we to tell his tale him pray.
Our hoste had the wordes for us alle:
Sire preest, quod he, now faire you befalle;
Say what you list, and we shul gladly here.
And with that word he said in this manere;
Telleth, quod he, your meditatioun,
But hasteth you, the sonne wol adoun.
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende you his grace.

The Persones Tale.

Our swete Lord God of heven, that no man wol perish, but wol that we comen all to the knowleching of him, and to the blisful lif that is pardurable,[1] amonesteth us by the Prophet Jeremie, that sayth in this wise: Stondeth upon the wayes, and seeth and axeth of the olde pathes; that is to say, of olde sentences; which is the good way: and walketh in that way, and ye shul finde refreshing for your soules. Many ben the wayes spirituel that leden folk to

[1] Lasting.

our Lord Jesu Crist, and to the regne of glory: of whi
wayes, ther is a ful noble way, and wel covenable,[1] whi
may not faille to man ne to woman, that thurgh his
hath misgon fro the right way of Jerusalem celestial: an
this way is cleped penance; of which man shuld gla
herken and enqueren with all his herte, to wete, what s
penance, and whennes it is cleped penance, and how ma
maneres ben of actions or werkings of penance, and ho
many spices[2] ther ben of penance, and which thing
apperteinen and behoven to penance, and which thing
distroublen penance.

Seint Ambrose sayth, That penance is the plaining
man for the gilt that he hath don, and no more to do an
thing for which him ought to plaine. And som doc
sayth: Penance is the waymenting[4] of man that sorwe
for his sinne, and peineth himself, for he hath misd
Penance, with certain circumstances, is veray repentance
man, that holdeth himself in sorwe and other peine for h
giltes: and for he shal be veray[5] penitent, he shal ha
bewailen the sinnes that he hath don, and stedfastly pu
posen in his herte to have shrift of mouth, and to d
satisfaction, and never to don thing, for which him ou
more to bewayle or complaine, and to continue in g
werkes: or elles his repentance may not availe. For s
Seint Isidor sayth; he is a japer and a gabber, and n
veray repentant, that eftsones[6] doth thing, for which h
oweth to repent. Weping, and not for to stint to
sinne, may not availe. But natheles, men shuld hope, th
at every time that man falleth, be it never so oft, that h
may arise thurgh penance, if he have grace: but certain
is gret doute. For as saith Seint Gregorie; unneth
ariseth he out of sinne, that is charged with the charge
evil usage. And therfore repentant folk, that stint for
sinne, and forlete[8] sinne or that[9] sinne forlete hem, ho
chirche holdeth hem siker[10] of hir salvation. And he tha
sinneth, and verailly repenteth him in his last day, ho
chirche yet hopeth his salvation, by the grete mercy of ou
Lord Jesu Crist, for his repentance: but take ye the sik
and certain way.

And now sith I have declared you, what thing is penanc

1 Suitable. 2 Species.
3 Lamentation. 4 Lamenting. 5 Truly.
6 Presently. 7 With difficulty. 8 Give over.
9 Before that. 10 Sure.

now ye shul understond, that ther ben three actions of penance. The first is, that a man be baptised after that he hath sinned. Seint Augustine sayth; but he be penitent for his old sinful lif, he may not beginne the newe clene lif: for certes, if he be baptised without penience of his old gilt, he receiveth the marke of baptisme, but not the grace, ne the remission of his sinnes, til he have veray repentance. Another defaute is, that men don wedly sinne after that they have received baptisme. The thridde defaute is, that men fall in venial sinnes after hir baptisme, fro day to day. Therof sayth Seint Augustine, that penance of good and humble folk is the penance of every day.

The spices of penance ben three. That on of hem is solempne, another is commune, and the thridde privee. Thilke penance, that is solempne, is in two maneres; as to be put out of holy chirche in lenton,[1] for slaughter of children, and swiche maner thing. Another is whan a man hath sinned openly, of which sinne the fame is openly spoken in the contree: and than holy chirche by jugement distreyneth[2] him for to do open penance. Commun penance is, that preestes enjoinen men in certain cas: as for to go paraventure naked on pilgrimage, or bare foot. Privee penance is thilke, that men don all day for privee sinnes, of which we shrive us prively, and receive privee penance.

Now shalt thou understond what is behoveful and necessary to every parfit penance: and this stont on[3] three thinges; contrition of herte, confession of mouth, and satisfaction. For which sayth Seint John Chrisostome: penance distreineth a man to accept benignely every peine, that him is enjoined, with coutrition of herte, and shrift of mouth, with satisfaction, and werking of all maner humilitee. And this is fruitful penance ayenst tho three thinges, in which we wrathen our Lord Jesu Crist: this is to say, by delit[4] in thinking, by rechelesnesse in speking, and by wicked sinful werking. And ayenst these wicked giltes is penance, that may be likened unto a tree.

The rote of this tree is contrition, that hideth him in the herte of him that is veray repentant, right as the rote

[1] Lent. [2] Constraineth. [3] Consists in

[4] In vers. 7457, this is used for *delight*. Here, I think, it must mean "offence," from the Latin *delictum*.

of the tree hideth him in the erthe. Of this rote of contrition springeth a stalke, that bereth branches and leves of confession, and fruit of satisfaction. Of which Crist sayth in his gospell; doth ye digne fruit of penitence; for by this fruit mow men understonde and knowe this tree, and not by the rote that is hid in the herte of man, ne by the branches, ne the leves of confession. And therfore our Lord Jesu Crist saith thus; by the fruit of hem shal ye knowe hem. Of this rote also springeth a seed of grace which seed is moder of sikernesse,[1] and this seed is ege and hote. The grace of this seed springeth of God, thurgh remembrance on the day of dome, and on the peines of helle. Of this matere saith Salomon, that in the drede of God man forletteth his sinne. The hete of this sede is the love of God, and the desiring of the joye perdurable. This hete draweth the herte of man to God, and doth[2] him hate his sinne. For sothly, ther is nothing that savoureth so sote[3] to a child, as the milke of his norice, ne nothing is to him more abhominable than that milke, whan it is medled with other mete. Right so the sinful man that loveth his sinne, him semeth, that it is to him most swete of any thing; but fro that time that he loveth sadly our Lord Jesu Crist, and desireth the lif perdurable, ther is to him nothing more abhominable. For sothly the lawe of God is the love of God. For which David the prophet sayd I have loved thy lawe, and hated wickednesse: he that loveth God, kepeth his lawe and his word. This tree saw the prophet Daniel in spirit, upon the vision of Nabuchodonosor, whan he counseiled him to do penance. Penance is the tree of lif, to hem that it receiven: and he that holdeth him in veray penance, is blisful, after the sentence of Salomon.

In this penance or contrition man shal understond foure thinges; that is to say, what is contrition; and which ben the causes that moven a man to contrition; and how he shuld be contrite; and what contrition availeth to the soule. Than is it thus, that contrition is the veray sorwe that a man receiveth in his herte for his sinnes, with the purpos to shriven him, and to do penance, and never more to don sinne. And this sorwe shal be in this manere as sayth Seint Bernard; it shal ben hevy and grevous, and ful sharpe and poinant in herte; first, for a man hath agilt

[1] Safety, salvation.
[2] Maketh.
[3] Sweet.
[4] Sinned against.

his Lord and his creatour; and more sharpe and poinant for he hath agilted his father celestial; and yet more sharpe and poinant, for he hath wrathed and agilted him that boughte him, that with his precious blod hath delivered us fro the bondes of sinne, and fro the crueltee of the devil, and fro the peines of helle.

The causes that ought to meve a man to contrition ben sixe. First, a man shal remembre him of his sinnes. But loke that that remembrance ne be to him no delit,[1] by no way, but grete shame and sorwe for his sinnes. For Job sayth, sinful men don werkes worthy of confession. And therfore sayth Ezechiel; I wol remembre me all the yeres of my lif,in the bitternesse of my herte. And God sayth in the Apocalipse; remembre you fro whens that ye ben fall, for before the time that ye sinned, ye weren children of God, and limmes of the regne of God; but for your sinne ye ben waxen thral and foule; membres of the fende; hate of angels; sclaunder of holy chirche, and fode of the false serpent; perpetuel matere of the fire of helle; and yet more foule and abhominable, for ye trespassen so oft times, as doth the hound that torneth again to ete his owen spewing; and yet fouler, for your long continuing in sinne, and your sinful usage, for which ye be roten in your sinnes, as a beest in his donge. Swiche manere thoughtes make a man to have shame of his sinne, and no delit; as God saith, by the Prophet Ezechiel; ye shul remembre you of your wayes, and they shul displese you. Sothly, sinnes ben the waies that lede folk to hell.

The second cause that ought to make a man to have disdeigne of sinne is this, that, as saith Seint Peter, who so doth sinne, is thral to sinne, and sinne putteth a man in gret thraldom. And therfore sayth the Prophet Ezechiel; I went sorweful, and had disdeigne of myself. Certes, wel ought a man have disdeigne of sinne, and withdrawe him fro that thraldom and vilany. And lo, what sayth Seneke in this mater. He saith thus; though I wist, that neither God ne man shuld never know it, yet wold I have disdeigne for to do sinne. And the same Seneke also sayth: I am borne to greter thinges, than to be thral to my body, or for to make of my body a thral. Ne a fouler thral may no man, ne woman, make of his body, than for to yeve his body to sinne. Al[2] were it the foulest chorle, or the

[1] Delight. [2] Albeit.

foulest woman that liveth, and lest of value, yet is he than more foule, and more in servitude. Ever fro the higher degree that man falleth, the more is he thral, and more to God and to the world vile and abhominable. O good God, wel ought a man have disdeigne of sinne, sith that thurgh sinne, ther he was free, he is made bond. And therfore sayth Seint Augustine: if thou hast disdeigne of thy servant, if he offend or sinne, have thou than disdeigne that thou thy self shuldest do sinne. Take reward of thy owen value, that thou ne be to foule to thyself. Alas! we oughten they than have disdeigne to be servants and thralles to sinne, and sore to be ashamed of hemself, that God of his endles goodnesse hath sette in high estat, or yeve hem witte, strength of body, hele,[1] beautee, or prosperitee, and bought hem fro the deth with his herte blood, that they so unkindly agains his gentillesse, quiten him so vilainously to slaughter of hir owen soules. O good God! ye women that ben of gret beautee, remembreth you on the proverbe of Salomon, that likeneth a faire woman, that is a foul hire body, to a ring of gold that is worne in the groine of a sowe: for right as a sowe wroteth[3] in every ordure, so wroteth she hire beautee in stinking ordure of sinne.

The thridde cause, that ought to meve a man to contrition, is drede of the day of dome, and of the horrible peines of helle. For as Seint Jerome sayth: at every time that me remembreth of the day of dome, I quake: for what I ete or drinke, or do what so[4] I do, ever semeth me that the trompe sowneth in min eres: riseth ye up that ben dede, and cometh to the jugement. O good God! moche ought a man to drede swiche a jugement, ther as we shul be alle as Seint Poule sayth, before the streit jugement of our Lord Jesu Crist; wheras he shal make a general congregation, wheras no man may be absent; for certes there availeth non essoine[5] ne non excusation; and not only that our defautes shul be juged, but eke that all our werkes shul openly be knowen. And, as sayth Seint Bernard, there ne shal no pleting[6] availe, ne no sleight:[7] we shal yeve rekening of everich idle word. Ther shal we have a juge that may not be deceived ne corrupt; and why? for certes all our thoughtes ben discovered, as to him: ne for praiere ne for mede, he wil not be corrupt. And therfore sith

[1] Health. [2] Snout. [3] Walloweth.
[4] Whatever. [5] A legal excuse for non-attendance.
[6] Pleading. [7] Skill, contrivance

Salomon: the wrath of God ne wol not spare no wight, for prayer ne for yeft.[1] And therfore at the day of dome ther is non hope to escape. Wherfore, as sayth Seint Anselme, ful gret anguish shal the sinful folk have at that time; ther shal be the sterne and wroth juge sitting above, and under him the horrible pitte of helle open, to destroy him that wolde not beknowen[2] his sinnes, which sinnes shullen openly be shewed before God and before every creature: and on the left side, mo Divels than any herte may thinke, for to harie[3] and drawe the sinful soules to the pitte of helle: and within the hertes of folk shal be the biting conscience, and without forth shal be the world all brenning. Whither than shal the wretched soule flee to hide him? Certes he may not hide him, he must come forth and shewe him. For certes, as saith Seint Jerome, the erth shal cast him out of it, and the see, and also the aire, that shal be ful of thonder clappes and lightnings. Now sothly, who so wil remembre him of these thinges, I gesse that his sinnes shal not torne him to delit, but to grete sorwe, for drede of the peine of helle. And therfore saith Job to God: suffer, Lord, that I may a while bewaile and bewepe, or[4] I go without retorning to the derke londe, ycovered with the derkenesse of deth; to the londe of misese and of derkenesse, wheras[5] is the shadowe of deth: wheras is non ordre ne ordinance, but grisly drede that ever shal last. Lo, here may ye see, that Job prayed respite a while, to bewepe and waile his trespas: for sothely on day of respite is better than all the tresour of this world. And for as moche as a man may acquite himself before God by penitence in this world, and not by tresour, therfore shuld he pray to God to yeve him respite a while, to bewepen and bewailen his trespas: for certes, all the sorwe that a man might make fro the beginning of the world, n'is but a litel thing, at regard of the sorwe of helle. The cause why that Job clepeth helle the londe of derkenesse; understondeth,[6] that he clepeth it londe or erth, for it is stable and never shal faile; and derke, for he that is in helle hath defaute of light naturel; for certes the derke light, that shal come out of the fire that ever shal brenne, shal torne hem all to peine that be in helle, for it sheweth hem the horrible Divels that hem turmenten. Covered with the derkenesse of deth; that is to say, that he that is in helle, shal have de-

[1] Gift. [2] Acknowledge.
[3] Hurry, [4] Before. [5] Where.
[6] *Meaneth*, or perhaps it is the second person pl. "understand ye."

faute of the sight of God; for certes the sight of God is the lif perdurable. The derknesse of deth, ben the sinnes that the wretched man hath don, which that distroubles him to see the face of God, right as a derke cloud betwene us and the sonne. It is londe of misese,[1] because that ther ben three maner of defautes ayenst three thinges that folk in this world han in this present lif; that is to say, honoures, delites, and richesses. Ayenst honour have they in hell shame and confusion: for wel ye wote, that men clepen honour the reverence that man doth to man; but in helle is non honour ne reverence; for certes no more reverence shal be don ther to a king, than to a knave. For what God sayth by the Prophet Jeremie; the folk, that me despisen, shal be in despite. Honour is also cleped gret lordeship. Ther shal no wight serven other, but to harme and turment. Honour is also cleped gret dignitee and highnesse; but in helle shal they be alle fortroden of divels. As God saith; the horrible Divels shal gon and comen upon the hedes of dampned folk: and this is, for as moche as the higher that they were in this present lif, the more shul they be abated and defouled in helle. Ayenst the richesse of this world shul they have misese of poverte, and this poverte shal be in foure thinges: in defaute of tresour; of which David sayth; the riche folk that enbraceden and oneden[2] all hir herte to tresour of this world, shul slepe in the sleping of deth, and nothing re shul they find in hir hondes of all hir tresour. And moreover, the misese of helle shal be in defaute of mete and drink. For God sayth thus by Moyses: they shul be wasted with honger, and the briddes[3] of helle shul devoure hem with bitter deth, and the gall of the dragon shal ben hir drinke, and the venime of the dragon hir morsels. And further over hir misese shal be in defaute of clothing, for they shul be naked in body, as of clothing, save the fire in which they brenne, and other filthes; and naked shul they be in soule, of all maner vertues, which that is the clothing of the soule. Wher ben than the gay robes, and softe shetes, and the fyn shertes? Lo, what sayth God of heven by the Prophet Esaie, that under hem shul be strewed mothes, and hir covertures shul ben of wormes of helle. And further over hir misese shal be in defaute of frendes, for he is not poure that hath good frendes: but ther is no frend; for neither God ne no good creature shal be frend

[1] Uneasiness. [2] United. [3] Birds.

to hem, and everich of hem shal hate other with dedly hate. The sonnes and the doughters shal rebel ayenst father and mother, and kinred ayenst kinred, and chiden, and despisen eche other, both day and night, as God sayth by the Prophet Micheas. And the loving children, that whilom loveden so fleshly, everich of hem wold eten other if they might. For how shuld they love togeder in the peines of helle, whan they hated eche other in the prosperitee of this lif? For truste wel, hir fleshly love was dedly hate. As saith the Prophet David: who so that loveth wickednesse, he hateth his owen soule, and who so hateth his owen soule, certes he may love non other wight in no manere: and therfore in helle is no solace ne no frendship, but ever the more kinredes that ben in helle, the more cursing, the more chiding, and the more dedly hate ther is among hem. And further over ther they shul have defaute of all maner delites, for certes delites ben after the appetites of the five wittes; as sight, hering, smelling, savouring, and touching. But in helle hir sight shal be ful of derkenesse and of smoke, and hir eyen ful of teres; and hir hering ful of waimenting and grinting of teeth, as sayth Jesu Crist: hir nosethirles shul be ful of stinking; and, as saith Esay the Prophet, hir savouring shal be ful of bitter galle; and touching of all hir body, shal be covered with fire that never shal quenche, and with wormes that never shal die, as God sayth by the mouth of Esay. And for as moche as they shul not wene that they mow dien for peine, and by deth flee fro peine, that mow they understonde in the word of Job, that sayth; Ther is the shadow of deth. Certes a shadowe hath likenesse of the thing of which it is shadowed, but shadowe is not the same thing of which it is shadowed: right so fareth the peine of helle; it is like deth, for the horrible anguish; and why? for it peineth hem ever as though they shuld die anon; but certes they shul not dien. For as saith Seint Gregory; To wretched caitifes shal be deth withouten deth, and ende withouten ende, and defaute withouten failing: for hir deth shal alway live, and hir ende shal ever more beginne, and hir defaute shal never faile. And therfore sayth Seint John the Evangelist; They shul folow deth and they shul not finde him, and they shul desire to die, and deth shal flee from hem. And eke Job saith, that in helle is non ordre of rule. And al be it so, that God hath creat all thing in right ordre, and nothing withouten ordre, bu-

all thinges ben ordred and numbred, yet natheles they tha ben dampned ben nothing in ordre, ne hold non orde For the erth shal bere hem no fruite; (for, as the Prophe David sayeth, God shal destroy the fruite of the erth, a fro hem) ne water shal yeve hem no moisture, ne the air no refreshing, ne the fire no light. For as sayth Sen Basil; The brenning of the fire of this world shal God yeve in helle to hem that ben dampned, but the light and the clerenesse shal be yeve in heven to his children; right a the good man yeveth flesh to his children, and bones to his houndes. And for they shul have non hope to escape sayth Job at last, that ther shal horrour and grisly drede dwellen withouten ende. Horrour is alway drede of harm that is to come, and this drede shal alway dwell in the hertes of hem that ben dampned. And therfore han they lorne[1] all hir hope for seven causes. First, for God that is hir juge shal be withouten mercie to hem; and they may not plese him; ne non of his halwes; ne they may yeve nothing for hir raunsom; ne they have no voice speke to him; ne they may not flee fro peine; ne they han no goodnesse in hem that they may shew to deliver hem fro peine. And therfore sayth Salomon; The wicked man dieth, and whan he is ded, he shal have non hope to escape fro peine. Who so than wold wel understonde these peines and bethinke him wel that he hath deserved these peines for his sinnes, certes he shulde have more talent to sighe and to wepe, than for to singe and playe. For as sayth Salomon; Who so that had the science to know the peines that ben established and ordeined for sinne, he wold forsake sinne. That science, saith Seint Austin, maketh a man to waimenten[2] in his herte.

The fourthe point, that oughte make a man have contrition, is the sorweful remembrance of the good dedes that he hath lefte[3] to don here in erthe, and also the good that he hath lorne. Sothly the good werkes that he hath left either they be the good werkes that he wrought er he fell into dedly sinne, or elles the good werkes that he wrought while he lay in sinne. Sothly the good werkes that he did before that he fell in dedly sinne, ben all mortified, astoned and dulled by the eft sinning: the other werkes that he wrought while he lay in sinne, they ben utterly ded, as to the lif perdurable in heven. Than thilke good werkes that

[1] Lost. [2] Lament.
[3] Omitted. [4] Confounded.

ben mortified by eft sinning, which he did while he was in charitee, moun never quicken ayen without veray[1] penitence. And therof sayth God by the mouth of Ezechiel; if the rightful man retorne again fro his rightwisnesse and do wickednesse, shal he liven? nay; for all the good werkes that he hath wrought, shul never be in remembrance, for he shal die in his sinne. And upon thilke chapitre sayth Seint Gregorie thus; that we shal understonde this principally, that when we don dedly sinne, it is for nought than to remembre or drawe into memorie the good werkes that we have wrought beforn: for certes in the werking of dedly sinne, ther is no trust in no good werk that we have don beforn; that is to say, as for to have therby the lif perdurable in heven. But natheles, the good werkes quicken again and comen again, and helpe and availe to have the lif perdurable in heven, whan we have contrition: but sothly the good werkes that men don while they ben in dedly sinne, for as moche as they were don in dedly sinne, they may never quicken: for certes, thing that never had lif, may never quicken: and natheles, al be it so that they availen not to have the lif perdurable, yet availen they to abreggen[2] the peine of helle, or elles to get temporal richesses, or elles that God wol the rather enlumine or light the herte of the sinful man to have repentance; and eke they availen for to usen a man to do good werkes, that the fende have the lesse power of his soule. And thus the curteis Lord Jesu Crist ne woll that no good werk that men don be loste, for in somwhat it shal availe. But for as moche as the good werkes that men don while they ben in good lif, ben all amortised[3] by sinne folowing, and eke sith all the good werkes that men don while they ben in dedly sinne, ben utterly ded, as for to have the lif perdurable, wel may that man, that no good werk ne doth, sing thilke newe Frenshe song, *J'ay tout perdu mon temps, et mon labour*. For certes sinne bereveth a man both goodnesse of nature, and eke the goodnesse of grace. For sothly the grace of the holy gost fareth like fire that may not ben idle; for fire faileth anon as it forletteth his werking, and right so grace faileth anon as it forletteth his werking. Than leseth the sinful man the goodnesse of glorie, that only is hight to good men that labouren and werken wel. Wel may he be sory than, that oweth all his lif to God, as

[1] True. [2] Shorten. [3] Deadened.

long as he hath lived, and also as long as he shal live, in no goodnesse ne hath to paie with his dette to God, whom he oweth all his lif: for trust wel he shal yeve accomptes, as sayth Seint Bernard, of all the goodes that han ben yeven him in this present lif, and how he hem dispended, in so moche that ther shal not perishe here of his hed, ne a moment of an houre ne shal perishe of his time, that he ne shal yeve therof a reken

The fifthe thing, that ought to meve a man to contri is remembrance of the passion that our Lord Jesu Cris suffered for our sinnes. For as sayth Seint Bernar While that I live, I shal have remembrance of the trave that our Lord Jesu Crist suffered in preching, his we nesse in traveling, his temptations whan he fasted, his l wakinges whan he prayed, his teres whan he wept pitee of good peple: the wo and the shame, and the that men sayden to him: of the foule spitting that spitten in his face, of the buffettes that men yave him the foule mouthes[1] and of the foule repreves that saiden to him: of the nayles with which he was nailed the crosse; and of all the remenant[2] of his passion, that suffred for mannes sinne, and nothing for his gilte. here ye shul understand that in mannes sinne is ev maner order, or ordinance, tourned up so[3] doun. For soth, that God and reson, and sensualitee, and the bod man, ben ordained, that everich of thise foure thi shuld have lordship over that other: as thus; God sh have lordship over reson, and reson over sensualitee, a sensualitee over the body of man. But sothly whan sinneth, all this ordre, or ordinance, is turned up so do and therfore than, for as moche as reson of man ne wol be subget ne obeisant to God, that is his lord by ri therfore leseth it the lordship that it shuld have o sensualitee, and eke over the body of man: and why? sensualitee rebelleth than ayenst reson: and by that w leseth reson the lordship over sensualitee, and over body. For right as reson is rebel to God, right so sensualitee rebel to reson, and the body also. And cer this disordinance, and this rebellion, our Lord Jesu Cr abought upon his precious body ful dere: and herken in whiche wise. For as moche as reson is rebel to G therfore is man worthy to have sorwe, and to be ded. T

[1] Supply, "that men made at him."
[2] Remainder. [3] Upside down.

uffred our Lord Jesu Crist for man, after that he had be etraied of his disciple, and distreined and bounde, so that is blood brast out at every nail of his hondes, as saith eint Augustin. And ferthermore, for as moche as reson f man wol not daunt sensualitee whan it may, therfore is nan worthy to have shame: and this suffered our Lord esu Crist for man, whan they spitten in his visage. And ertherover,[1] for as moche as the caitif body of man is rebel oth to reson and to sensualitee, therfore it is worthy the leth: and this suffered our Lord Jesu Crist upon the rosse, wheras ther was no part of his body free, without rete peine and bitter passion. And all this suffred our ord Jesu Crist that never forfaited; and thus sayd he: o mochel am I peined, for thinges that I never deserved: nd to moche defouled for shendship[2] that man is worthy o have. And therfore may the sinful man wel say, as ayth Seint Bernard: Accursed be the bitternesse of my inne, for whiche ther must be suffered so moche bitter- nesse. For certes, after the divers discordance of our wickednesse was the passion of Jesu Crist ordeined in livers thinges; as thus. Certes sinful mannes soule is betraied of the divel, by coveitise of temporel prosperitee; nd scorned by disceite, whan he cheseth fleshly delites; nd yet it is turmented by impatience of adversitee, and bespet by servage and subjection of sinne; and at the last t is slain finally. For this discordance of sinful man, was Jesu Crist first betraied; and after that was he bounde, that came for to unbinde us of sinne and of peine. Than was he bescorned, that only shuld have ben honoured in alle thinges and of alle thinges. Than was his visage, that ought to be desired to be seen of all mankind (in which visage angels desiren to loke) vilainsly bespet. Than was he scourged that nothing had trespassed; and finally, than was he crucified and slain. Than were accomplished the wordes of Esaie: He was wounded for our misdedes, and defouled for our felonies. Now sith that Jesu Crist toke on himself the peine of all our wickednesses, moche ought sinful man to wepe and to bewaile, that for his sinnes Goddes sone of heven shuld all this peine endure.

The sixte thing, that shuld move a man to contrition, is the hope of three thinges, that is to say, foryevenesse of sinne, and the yeft of grace for to do wel, and the glorie of

[1] Moreover. [2] Destruction.

heven, with whiche God shal guerdon man for his gode dedes. And for as moche as Jesu Crist yeveth us thise yeftes of his largenesse, and of his soveraine bountee, therfore is he cleped, *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum*. Jesus is for to say, saviour or salvation, on whom men shul hope to have foryevenesse of sinnes, which that is propre salvation of sinnes. And therfore sayd the Angel to Joseph, Thou shalt clepe his name Jesus, that shal save his peple of hir sinnes. And hereof saith Seint Peter Ther is non other name under heven, that is yeven to any man, by which a man may be saved, but only Jesus Nazarenus is as moche for to say, as flourishing, in which a man shal hope, that he, that yeveth him remission of sinnes, shal yeve him also grace wel for to do: for in the flour is hope of fruit in time coming, and in foryevenesse of sinnes hope of grace wel to do. I was at the dore of thin herte, sayth Jesus, and cleped for to enter. He that openeth to me, shal have foryevenesse of his sinnes, and I wol enter into him by my grace, and soupe with him of the good werkes that he shal don, which werkes ben the food of God, and he shal soupe with me by the gret joye that I shal yeve him. Thus shal man hope, that for the werkes of penance God shal yeve him his regne, as he behight[1] him in the Gospel.

Now shal man understande, in which maner shal be his contrition. I say, that it shal be universal and total; that is to say, a man shal be veray repentant for all his sinnes that he hath don in delite of his thought, for delite is perilous. For ther ben two maner of consentinges; that on of hem is cleped consenting of affection, whan a man is meved to do sinne, and than deliteth him longe for to thinke on that sinne, and his reson apperceiveth it wel, that it is sinne ayenst the lawe of God, and yet his reson refraineth not his foule delite or talent, though he see wel apertly,[2] that it is ayenst the reverence of God; although his reson consent not to do that sinne indede, yet sayn some doctours, that swiche delite that dwelleth longe is full perilous, al be it never so lite. And also a man shal sorow, namely for all that ever he hath desired ayenst the lawe of God, with parfite consenting of his reson, for therof is no doute, that it is dedly sinne in consenting: but certes ther is no dedly sinne, but that it is first in mann

[1] Promised. [2] Openly.

thought, and after that in his delite, and so forth into consenting, and into dede. Wherfore I say, that many men ne repent hem never of swiche thoughtes and delites, ne never shriven hem of it, but only of the dede of gret sinnes outward: wherfore I say, that swiche wicked delites ben subtil begilers of hem that shul be dampned. Moreover man ought to sorwen for his wicked wordes, as wel as for his wicked dedes: for certes repentance of a singuler sinne, and not repentant of all his other sinnes; or elles repenting him of all his other sinnes, and not of a singuler sinne, may not availe. For certes God Almighty is all good; and therfore, either he foryeveth all, or elles right nought. And therfore sayth Seint Augustin: I wote certainly, that God is enemy to every sinner: and how than? he that observeth on sinne, shal he have foryevenesse of the remenant of his other sinnes? Nay. And furtherover contrition shuld be wonder sorweful and anguishous: and therfore yeveth him God plainly his mercie: and therfore whan my soule was anguishous, and sorweful within me, than had I remembrance of God, that my praier might come to him. Furtherover contrition muste be continuel, and that man have stedfast purpose to shrive him, and to amend him of his lif. For sothly, while contrition lasteth, man may ever hope to have foryevenesse. And of this cometh hate of sinne, that destroyeth sinne bothe in himself, and eke in other folk at his power. For which sayth David; they that love God, hate wickednesse: for to love God, is for to love that he loveth, and hate that he hateth.

The last thing that men shull understand in contrition is this, wherof availeth contrition. I say, that contrition somtime delivereth man fro sinne: of which David saith; I say, (quod David) I purposed fermely to shrive me, and thou Lord relesedest my sinne. And right so as contrition availeth not without sad purpos of shrift and satisfaction, right so litel worth is shrift or satisfaction withouten contrition. And moreover contrition destroyeth the prison of helle, and maketh weke and feble all the strengthes of the Devils, and restoreth the yeftes of the holy gost, and of all good vertues, and it clenseth the soule of sinne, and delivereth it fro the peine of helle, and fro the compagnie of the devil, and fro the servage of sinne, and restoreth it to all goodes spirituel, and to the compagnie and communion of holy chirche. And furtherover it maketh him, that

whilom was sone of ire, to be the sone of grace: and t
these thinges ben preved by holy writ. And therfore
that wold set his entent to thise thinges, he were fal wi
for sothly he ne shuld have than in all his lif curag
sinne, but yeve his herte and body to the service of
Crist, and therof do him homage. For certes our L
Jesu Crist hath spared us so benignely in our folies
if he ne had pitee on mannes soule, a sory song might
alle singe.

Explicit prima pars penitentiæ; et incipit pars secunda.

The second part of penitence is confession, and thi
signe of contrition. Now shul ye understonde what is
fession; and whether it ought nedes to be don or non: a
which thinges ben covenable[1] to veray confession.

First shalt thou understande, that confession is ver
shewing of sinnes to the preest; this is to saie veray, for
must confesse him of all the conditions that belongen
his sinne, as ferforth as he can: all must be sayd a
nothing excused, ne hid, ne forwrapped: and not avau
him of his good werkes. Also it is necessarie to un
stande whennes that sinnes springen, and how they encres
and which they ben.

Of springing of sinnes saith Seint Poule in this wis
that right as by on man sin entred first into this wor
and thurgh sinne deth, right so deth entreth into alle m
that sinnen: and this man was Adam, by whom sin
entred into this world, whan he brake the commandeme
of God. And therfore he that first was so mighty, that
ne shuld have died, became swiche on that he must nede
die, whether he wold or no; and all his progenie in t
world, that in thilke maner sinnen, dien. Loke[2] that
the estat of innocence, whan Adam and Eve weren nake
in paradise, and no thing ne hadden shame of hir naked
nesse, how that the serpent, that was most wily of a
other bestes that God had made, sayd to the woman: wh
commanded God you, that ye shuld not ete of every tre
in Paradise? The woman answered: of the fruit, sa
she, of the trees of Paradise we feden us, but of the fru
of the tree that is in the middel of Paradise God forbo
for to eten, ne to touche it, lest we shuld die. Th

[1] Agreeable. [2] Look ye.

erpent sayd to the woman: nay, nay, ye shul not dien of leth; for soth God wote, that what day that ye ete therof rour eyen shul open, and ye shul be as goddes, knowing good and harme. The woman saw that the tree was good o feding, and faire to the eyen, and delectable to the sight; he toke of the fruit of the tree and did ete, and yave to iire husbond, and he ete; and anon the eyen of hem both pened: and whan they knewe that they were naked, they owed of a fig-tree leves in maner of breches, to hiden hir members. Here mow ye seen, that dedly sinne hath first suggestion of the fende, as sheweth here by the adder; and afterward the delit of the flesh, as sheweth here by Eve; and after that the consenting of reson, as sheweth by Adam. For trust wel, though so it were, that the fende tempted Eve, that is to say, the flesh, and the flesh had delit in the beautee of the fruit defended, yet certes til that reson, that is to say, Adam, consented to the eting of the fruit, yet stode he in the state of innocence. Of thilke Adam toke we thilke sinne original; from him fleshly discended be we all, and engendred of vile and corrupt mater: and whan the soule is put in our bodies, right anon is contract original sinne; and that, that was erst but only peine of concupiscence, is afterward both peine and sinne: and therfore we ben all yborne sones of wrath, and of dampnation perdurable, if ne were Baptisme that we receive, which benimeth us[1] the culpe: but forsoth the peine dwelleth with us as to temptation, which peine hight concupiscence. This concupiscence, whan it is wrongfully disposed or ordeined in man, it maketh him coveit, by coveitise of flesh, fleshly sinne by sight of his eyen, as to erthly thinges, and also coveitise of highnesse by pride of herte.

Now as to speke of the first coveitise, that is concupiscence, after the lawe of our membres, that were lawfully ymaked, and by rightful jugement of God, I say, for as moche as a man is not obeisant to God, that is his Lord, therfore is his herte to him disobeisant thurgh concupiscence, which is called nourishing of sinne, and occasion of sinne. Therfore, all the while that a man hath within him the peine of concupiscence, it is impossible, but he be tempted somtime, and moved in his flesh to sinne. And this thing may not faile, as long as he liveth. It may wel

[1] Taketh away from us.

waxe feble by vertue of Baptisme, and by the grace of God thurgh penitence; but fully ne shal it never quenche, for he ne shal somtime be meved in himselfe, but if he were refreined by sikenesse, or malefice of sorcerie, or excesse drinkes. For lo, what sayth Seint Poule: the flesh coveiteth ayenst the spirit, and the spirit ayenst the flesh: they be so contrarie and so striven, that a man may not alway: as he wold. The same Seint Poule, after his gret penance in water and in lond; in water by night and by day in gret peril, and in gret peine; in lond, in grete famine and thurst, cold and clothles, and ones stoned almost to deth: yet sayd he, alas! I caitif man, who shal deliver me from the prison of my caitif body? And Seint Jerom, when he long time had dwelled in desert, wheras he had no compagnie but of wilde bestes; wheras he had no mete but herbes, and water to his drinke, ne no bed but the naked erth, wherfore his flesh was black, as an Ethiopian: he hete, and nie destroyed for cold: yet sayd he, that the brenning of lecherie boiled in all his body. Wherfore I wot wel sikerly[1] that they be deceived that say, they be not tempted in hir bodies. Witnesse Seint James that said, that every wight is tempted in his owen conscience, that is to say, that eche of us hath mater and occasion to be tempted of the norishing of sinne, that is in his body. And therfore sayth Seint John the Evangelist: if we seye that we ben without sinne, we deceive ourself, and trouthe is not in us.

Now shul ye understonde, in what maner sinne wexeth and encreseth in man. The first thing is that nourishing of sinne, of which I spake before, that is concupiscence: and after that cometh suggestion of the divel, this is to say, the divels belous,[2] with which he bloweth in man the fire of concupiscence: and after that a man bethinketh him whether he wol do or no that thing to which he is tempted. And than if a man withstond and weive the first entising of his flesh, and of the fend, than it is no sinne: and if so be he do not, than feleth he anon a flame of delit, and than it is good to beware and kepe[3] him wel, or elles he wol fall anon to consenting of sinne, and than wol he do it, if he may have time and place. And of this mater sayth Moyses[4] by the devil, in this maner: the fend sayth

[1] Surely. [2] Bellows. [3] To warn and restrain.

[4] I cannot tell where. Perhaps there may be some such passage in the Rabbinical histories of Moses.—*Tyrwhitt.*

wol chace and pursue man by wicked suggestion, and I ·ol hent[1] him by meving and stirring of sinne, and I wol epart my pris, or my prey, by deliberation, and my lust ıal be accomplised in delit; I wol draw my swerd in con-ɜıting: (for certes, right as a swerd departeth a thing in ɔvo peces, right so consenting departeth God fro man) and ıan wol I sle him with my hond in dede of sinne. Thus ayth the fend; for certes, than is a man al ded in soule; nd thus is sinne accomplised, by temptation, by delit, and y consenting: and than is the sinne actuel.

Forsoth sinne is in two maners, either it is venial, or edly sinne. Sothly, whan a man loveth any creature ıore than Jesu Crist our creatour, than it is dedly sinne: nd venial sinne it is, if a man love Jesu Crist lesse than im ought. Forsoth the dede of this venial sinne is ful erilous, for it amenuseth[2] the love that man shuld have ɔ God, more and more. And therfore if a man charge imself with many swiche venial sinnes, certes, but if so be hat he somtime discharge him of hem by shrift, they may ɾel lightly amenuse in him all the love that he hath to esu Crist: and in this wise skippeth[3] venial sinne into edly sinne. For certes, the more that a man chargeth his ɔule with venial sinnes, the more he is enclined to fall ıto dedly sinne. And therfore let us not be negligent to ischarge us of venial sinnes. For the proverbe sayth, hat many smal maken a gret. And herken this ensample: ı gret wawe of the see cometh somtime with so gret a iolence, that it drencheth the ship: and the same harme ɔ somtime the smal dropes of water, that enteren thurgh litel crevis in the thurrok,[4] and in the botom of the ship, ; men ben so negligent, that they discharge hem not by ime. And therfore although ther be difference betwix hise two causes of drenching, algates[5] the ship is dreint. ɬight so fareth it somtime of dedly sinne, and of anoious[6]

1 Seize upon. 2 Lessens. 3 Leapeth, passeth quickly.
4 This seems to have signified any sort of *keeled* vessel, and from ɜence what we call *the hold* of a ship. The following explanation of it ·om an old book, entitled, "*Oure Ladyes Mirroure*," (Lond. 1530. fol. 7. b.) will fully justify Chaucer's use of it in both places, in the first ɬerally, and in the second metaphorically. "Ye shall understande hat there ys a place in the bottome of a shyppe, wherin ys gathered ll the fylthe that cometh into the shyppe—and it is called in some ontre of thys londe a *therrocke*."—*Tyrwhitt*.
5 Either way. 6 Hurtful.

venial sinnes, whan they multiplie in man so gret
thilke worldly thinges that he loveth, thurgh wh
sinneth venially, is as gret in his herte as the love o
or more: and therfore the love of every thing that
beset in God, ne don principally for Goddes sake, al
that a man love it lesse than God, yet is it venial
and dedly sinne is, whan the love of any thing weig
the herte of man, as moche as the love of God, or
Dedly sinne, as sayth Seint Augustine, is, whan
tourneth his herte fro God, whiche that is veray sov
bountee, that may not chaunge, and yeveth his he
thing that may chaunge and flitte: and certes, that is
thing save God of heven. For soth is, that if a man
his love, which that he oweth to God with all his
unto a creature, certes, as moche of his love as he
to the same creature, so moche he bereveth fro Go
therfore doth he sinne: for he, that is dettour to G
yeldeth not to God all his dette, that is to sayn,
love of his herte.

Now sith man understondeth generally, which is
sinne, than is it covenable to tell specially of sinnes, w
that many a man peraventure demeth hem no sinne
shriveth him not of the same, and yet natheles th
sinnes sothly, as thise clerkes writen; this is to say, at
tyme that man eteth and drinketh more than suffi
the sustenance of his body, in certain he doth sinne
whan he speketh more than it nedeth, he doth sinne
whan he herkeneth not benignely the complaint
poure; eke whan he is in hele[1] of body, and wol no
whan other folk fast, without cause resonable; eke
he slepeth more than nedeth, or whan he cometh by
encheson[2] to late to chirche, or to other werkes of cha
eke whan he useth his wif withouten soveraine des
engendrure, to the honour of God, or for the entent t
his wif his dette of his body; eke whan he wol not
the sike, or the prisoner, if he may; eke if he love
child, or other worldly thing, more than reson requi
eke if he flater or blandise more than him ought fo
necessitee; eke if he amenuse[3] or withdrawe the alme
the poure; eke if he apparaile[4] his mete more deliciously
than nede is, or ete it to hastily by likerousnesse; eke
talke vanitees in the chirche, or at Goddes service, or

[1] Health. [2] Occasion.
[3] Lessen. [4] Set out.

be a taler[1] of idle wordes of foly or vilanie, for he shal ɔd accomptes of it at the day of dome; eke whan he beghteth or assureth to don thinges that he may not performe; eke whan that he by lightnesse of foly missayeth[2] scorneth his neighbour; eke whan he hath ony wicked ɜpecion of thing, ther he ne wote of it no sothfastnesse:[3] ise thinges and mo withouten nombre be sinnes, as sayth int Augustine. Now shul ye understonde, that al be it that non erthly man may eschewe al venial sinnes, yet ay he refreine him, by the brenning love that he hath to r Lord Jesu Crist, and by prayer and confession, and her good werkes, so that it shal but litel grieve. For as yth Seint Augustine; if a man love God in swiche maner, at all that ever he doth is in the love of God, or for the ve of God verayly, for he brenneth in the love of God, ke how moche that o drope of water, which falleth into fourneis ful of fire, anoieth or greveth the brenning of e fire, in like maner anoieth or greveth a venial sinne ɪto that man, whiche is stedfast and parfite in the love of ɪr Saviour Jesu Crist. Furthermore, men may also reɜine and put away venial sinne, by receiving worthily the ecious body of Jesu Crist; by receiving eke of holy ater; by almes dede; by general confession of *Confiteor* Masse, and at prime,[4] and at complin,[5] and by blessing Bishoppes and Preestes, and by other good werkes.

De septem peccatis mortalibus.

Now it is behovely to tellen whiche ben dedly sinnes, ɪat is to say, chiefetaines of sinnes; for as moche as all ɪey ren in o lees,[6] but in divers maners. Now ben they eped chiefetaines, for as moche as they be chiefe, and f hem springen all other sinnes. The rote of thise sinnes ɪan is pride, the general rote of all harmes. For of this ɔte springen certain braunches: as ire, envie, accidie[7] or outhe, avarice or coveitise, (to commun understonding) lotonie, and lecherie: and eche of thise chief sinnes hath is braunches and his twigges, as shal be declared in hir hapitres folowing.

1 Teller, speaker. 2 Slandereth, speaketh evil of.
3 Certain truth. 4 Early matins.
5 Even-song. 6 One leash. 7 Negligence.

De superbia.

And though so be, that no man knoweth utterly the nombre of the twigges, and of the harmes that come of pride, yet wol I shew a partie of hem, as ye shul understond. Ther is inobedience, avaunting, ipocrisie, despit, arrogance, impudence, swelling of herte, insolence, elacioun, impatience, strif, contumacie, presumption, irreverence, pertinacie, vaine glorie, and many other twigges that I cannot declare. Inobedient is he that disobeyeth for despit to the commandements of God, and to his soveraines, and to his gostly fader. Avauntour, is he that bosteth of the harme or of the bountee that he hath don. Ipocrite, is he that hideth to shew him swiche as he is, and sheweth him to seme swiche as he is not. Despitous, is he that hath despit, disdain of his neighebour, that is to sayn, of his even Cristen, or hath despit to do that him ought to do. Arrogant, is he that thinketh that he hath those bountees in him, that he hath not, or weneth that he shulde have hem by his deserving, or elles that demeth that he be that he is not. Impudent, is he that for his pride hath no shame of his sinnes. Swelling of herte, is whan man rejoyceth him of harme that he hath don. Insolent, is he that despiseth all his jugement all other folk, as in regarde of his value of his conning,[2] of his speking, and of his bering. Elacioun is whan he ne may neither suffre to have maister ne felawe. Impatient, is he that wol not be taught, ne undernome of his vice, and by strif werrieth truth wetingly,[4] and defendeth his foly. *Contumax*, is he that thurgh his indignation is ayenst every auctoritee or power of hem that hem his soveraines. Presumption, is whan a man undertaketh an emprise that him ought not to do, or elles that he may not do, and this is called surquidrie.[5] Irreverence, is whan man doth not honour ther as him ought to do, and waiteth to be reverenced. Pertinacie, is whan man defendeth his foly, and trusteth to moche in his owen wit. Vaine-glorie is for to have pompe, and delit in his temporel highnesse, and glorye him in his worldly estate. Jangling, is whan man speketh to moche before folk, and clappeth as a mille, and taketh no kepe[6] what he sayth.

[1] Fellow-christian. [2] Knowledge.
[3] Reminded. [4] Knowingly
[5] Presumption, overweening conceit. [6] Care.

nd yet ther is a privee spice of pride, that waiteth first
e salewed,[1] or he wol salew, all be he lesse worthy than
other is; and eke he waiteth[2] to sit, or to go above
in the way, or kisse the pax, or ben encensed, or gon
offring before his neighbour, and swiche semblable
ges, ayenst his duetee[3] peraventure, but that he hath
herte and his entente, in swiche a proude desire, to be
nified and honoured beforn the peple.
ow ben ther two maner of prides; that on of hem is
hin the herte of a man, and that other is without. Of
che sothly thise foresayd thinges, and mo than I have
l, apperteinen to pride, that is within the herte of man;
ther be other spices of pride that ben withouten: but
heles, that on of thise spices of pride is signe of that
er, right as the gay levesell[4] at the Taverne is signe of
win that is in the celler. And this is in many thinges:
n speche and contenance, and outragious array of cloth-
: for certes, if ther had ben no sinne in clothing, Crist
ld not so sone have noted and spoken of the clothing of
lke rich man in the gospel. And, as Seint Gregory
th, that precious clothing is culpable for the derthe[5] of
and for his softnesse, and for his strangenesse and dis-
ising, and for the superfluitee, or for the inordinate
ntnesse of it, alas! may not a man see as in our daies,
e sinneful costlewe array of clothing, and namely in to
oche superfluitee, or elles in to disordinate scantnesse?
As to the firste sinne in superfluitee of clothing, whiche
at maketh it so dere, to the harme of the peple, not only
e coste of the enbrouding, the disguising, endenting,
barring, ounding,[6] paling,[7] winding, or bending, and
mblable[8] wast of cloth in vanitee; but ther is also the
stlewe furring in hir gounes, so moche pounsoning of

[1] Saluted. [2] Seeketh. [3] Due.
[4] Levesell. See the n. on ver. 4059, though I am by no means satis-
ed with the explanation there given of this word. The interpretation
' it in the *Prompt. Parv.* will not help us much. "Levecel beforn a
yndowe or other place. *Umbraculum.*" My conjecture with respect
the origin of the proverb, *Good wine needs no bush*, is certainly wrong.
hat refers to a very old practice of hanging up a bush, or bough, where
ine is to be sold. The Italians have the same proverb, *Al buono vino
on bisogna frasca.—Tyrwhitt.*
[5] Dearness, cost. [6] Waving, as in our watered silks.
[7] Imitating pales. It is hopeless to expect to arrive at the precise
eaning of all these terms, unless we could find specimens of the gar-
ents to which they refer. [8] Such like.

chesel[1] to maken holes, so moche dagging of shers[2] w
the superfluitee in length of the foresaide gounes, tra
in the dong and in the myre, on hors and eke on fo
wel of man as of woman, that all thilke trailing is ver
(as in effect) wasted, consumed, thredbare, and rotten w
dong,[3] rather than it is yeven to the poure, to gret da
of the foresayd poure folk, and that in sondry wise:
is to sayn, the more that cloth is wasted, the more re
cost to the poure peple for the scarcenesse; and fur
over, if so be that they wolden yeve swiche pourst
and dagged clothing to the poure peple, it is not
venient to were for hir estate, ne suffisant to bot
necessitee, to kepe hem fro the distemperance of the
ment. Upon that other side, to speke of the horrible
ordinat scantnesse of clothing, as ben thise cutted sa
or hanselines,[5] that thurgh hir shortenesse cover no
shameful membres of man, to wicked entente; alas!
of hem shewen the bosse[6] and the shape of the ho
swollen membres, that semen like to the maladie of
nia, in the wrapping of hir hosen, and eke the butt
of hem behinde, that faren as it were the hinder part
she ape in the ful of the mone. And moreover the wre
swollen membres that they shew thurgh disguising,
parting[7] of hir hosen in white and rede, semeth tha
hir shameful privee membres were flaine. And if s
that they departe hir hosen in other colours, as is w
and blewe, or white and blake, or blake and rede, a
forth; than semeth it, as by variance of colour, tha
half part of hir privee membres ben corrupt by the fi
Seint Anthonie, or by cancre, or other swiche misch
Of the hinder part of hir buttokkes it is ful horrible t
see, for certes in that partie of hir body ther as they
gen hir stinking ordure, that foule partie shewe the
the peple proudely in despite of honestee, whiche hone
that Jesu Crist and his frendes observed to shewe in
lif. Now as to the outrageous array of women, God w
that though the visages of som of hem semen ful ch

[1] Punching or stamping with a chisel.
[2] Slitting or clipping with scissars.
[3] If we remember the description of Aldgate and Whitechapel in writings of Stowe, we can well imagine what "London mud" was a still earlier period when Chaucer wrote.
[4] Help.
[5] Some kind of breeches.
[6] Protuberance.
[7] Barring in stripes of white and red.

debonaire, yet notifien they, in hir array of attire, rousnesse and pride. I say not that honestee in cloth- of man or woman is uncovenable, but certes the super- tee or disordinat scarcitee of clothing is reprevable. o the sinne of ornament, or of apparaile, is in thinges t apperteine to riding, as in to many delicat hors, that holden for delit, that ben so faire, fatte, and costlewe; l also in many a vicious knave, that is susteined because hem; in curious harneis, as in sadles, cropers, peitrels,[1] l bridles, covered with precious cloth and rich, barred l plated of gold and silver. For which God sayth by charie the Prophet, I wol confounde the riders of swiche rs. These folke taken litel regard of the riding of Goddes ne of heven, and of his harneis, whan he rode upon the se, and had non other harneis but the poure clothes of s disciples, ne we rede not that ever he rode on ony her beste. I speke this for the sinne of superfluitee, id not for honestee, whan reson it requireth. And more- rer, certes pride is gretly notified in holding of gret einie,[2] whan they ben of litel profite or of right no pro- te, and namely whan that meinie is felonous and damage- us to the peple by hardinesse of high lordeship, or by way f offioe; for certes, swiche lordes sell than hir lordeship the Devil of helle, whan they susteine the wickednesse f hir meinie. Or elles, whan thise folk of low degree, as hey that holden hostelries, susteinen thefte[3] of hir hostel- ers, and that is in many maner of deceites: thilke maner f folk ben the flies that folowen the hony, or elles the ioundes that folowen the caraine. Swiche foresayde folk trangleu spirituelly hir lordeshipes; for which thus saith David the Prophet; wicked deth mot come unto thilke lordeshipes, and God yeve that they mot descend into helle, all doun; for in hir houses is iniquitee and shrewed- nesse,[4] and not God of heven. And certes, but if they don amendement, right as God yave his benison to Laban by the service of Jacob, and to Pharao by the service of Joseph, right so God wol yeve his malison to swiche lorde- shipes as susteine the wickednesse of hir servants, but they come to amendement. Pride of the table appereth eke ful oft; for certes riche men be cleped to festes, and poure folk be put away and rebuked; and also in excesse

[1] Poitrels, breast-plates. [2] A great company of servants.
[3] Permit, wink at the pilferings. [4] Accursedness.

of divers metes and drinkes, and namely swiche mete bake metes and dishe metes brenning of wilde fire, peinted and castelled with paper, and semblable wast that it is abusion to thinke. And eke in to gret preciosnesse of vessell, and curiositee of minstralcie, by whic man is stirred more to the delites of luxurie, if so be th he sette his herte the lesse upon oure Lord Jesu Cris is a sinne; and certainely the delites might ben so gre this cas, that a man might lightly fall by hem into de sinne. The spices that sourden of[1] pride, sothly w they sourden of malice imagined, avised, and forecast elles of usage, ben dedly sinnes, it is no doute. a whan they sourden by freeltee unavised sodenly, a sodenly withdraw again, al be they grevous sinnes, I s that they be not dedly. Now might men aske, wh that pride sourdeth and springeth. I say that somti springeth of the goodes of nature, somtime of the goo of fortune, and somtime of the goodes of grace. Ce the goodes of nature stonden only in the goodes o body, or of the soule. Certes, the goodes of the body hele of body, strength, delivernesse,[2] beautee, gentrie, chise,[3] the goodes of nature of the soule ben good sharpe understonding, subtil engine, vertue naturel, memorie: goodes of fortune ben riches, high degrees lordshipes, and preisinges of the peple: goodes of g ben science, power to suffre spirituel travaile, benig vertuous contemplation, withstonding of temptation, semblable thinges: of which foresayd goodes, certes a gret folie, a man to priden him in ony of hem all. N as for to speke of goodes of nature, God wote that somt we have hem in nature as moche to our damage as to profite. As for to speke of hele of body, trewely it pass ful lightly, and also it is ful ofte encheson[4] of sikenesse the soule: for God wote, the flesh is a gret enemy to soule: and therfore the more that the body is hole, more be we in peril to falle. Eke for to priden him in strength of body, it is a grete folie: for certes the fle coveiteth ayenst the spirite: and ever the more stre that the flesh is, the sorier may the soule be: and over this strength of body, and worldly hardinesse, causeth oft to many man peril and mischance. Also to have pr

[1] Arise from.
[2] Frankness.
[3] Agility.
[4] Occasion.

gentrie is right gret folie: for oft time the gentrie of
s body benimeth[1] the gentrie of the soule: and also we
n all of o fader and of o moder: and all we ben of o
ture rotten and corrupt, both riche and poure. Forsoth
maner gentrie is for to preise, that appareilleth mannes
rage with vertues and moralitees, and maketh him
ristes child; for trusteth wel, that over what[2] man that
ne hath maistrie, he is a veray cherl to sinne.

Now ben ther general signes of gentilnesse; as eschew-
ig of vice and ribaudrie, and servage of sinne, in word,
id in werk and contenance, and using vertue, as courtesie,
id clenenesse, and to be liberal; that is to say, large by
iesure; for thilke that passeth mesure, is folie and sinne.
nother is to remember him of bountee, that he of other
olk hath received. Another is to be benigne to his subgettes;
vherfore saith Seneke; ther is nothing more covenable to a
nan of high estate, than debonairtee and pitee: and therfore
hise flies that men clepen bees, whan they make hir king,
hey chesen on that hath no pricke, wherwith he may sting.
Another is, man to have a noble herte and a diligent, to at-
teine to high vertuous thinges. Now certes, a man to priden
him in the goodes of grace, is eke an outrageous folie: for
thilke yeftes of grace that shuld have tourned him to good-
nesse, and to medicine, tourneth him to venime and confu-
sion, as sayth Seint Gregorie. Certes also, who so prideth him
in the goodnesse of fortune, he is a gret fool: for somtime is
a man a gret lord by the morwe, that is a caitife and a wretch
or[3] it be night: and somtime the richesse of a man is cause
of his deth: and somtime the delites of a man ben cause of
grevous maladie, thurgh which he dieth. Certes, the com-
mendation of the peple is ful false and brotel[4] for to trust;
this day they preise, to-morwe they blame. God wote,
desire to have commendation of the peple hath caused deth
to many a besy man.

Remedium Superbiæ.

Now sith that so is, that ye have understond what is
pride, and which be the spices of it, and how menues pride
sourdeth[5] and springeth; now ye shul understond which is
the remedie ayenst it. Humilitee or mekenesse is the
remedy ayenst pride; that is a vertue, thurgh which a man

[1] Taketh away. [2] Whatsoever. [3] Before.
[4] Brittle. [5] Ariseth.

hath veray knowlege of himself, and holdeth of himself no deintee, ne no pris, as in regard of his desertes, considering ever his freeltee. Now ben ther three maner of humilitees; as humilitee in herte, and another in the mouth, and the thridde in werkes. The humilitee in herte is in foure maners: that on is, whan a man holdeth himself as nought worth before God of heven: the second is, whan he despiseth non other man: the thridde is, whan he ne recketh nat though men holde him nought worth: and the fourth is, whan he is not sory of his humiliation. Also the humilitee of mouth is in foure thinges; in attempree speche; in humilitee of speche; and whan he confesseth with his owen mouth, that he is swiche as he thinketh that he is in his herte: another is, whan he preiseth the bountee of another man and nothing therof amenuseth.[2] Humilitee eke in werkes is in foure maners. The first is, whan he putteth other men before him; the second is, to chese the lowest place of all; the thridde is, gladly to assent to good conseil; the fourth is, to stond gladly to the award of his soveraine, or of him that is higher in degree: certain this is a gret werk of humilitee.

De Invidia.

After pride wol I speke of the foule sinne of Envie, which that is, after the word of the philosopher,[3] sorwe of other mennes prosperitee; and after the word of Seint Augustine, it is sorwe of other mennes wele, and joye of other mennes harme. This foule sinne is platly ayenst the holy gost. Al be it so, that every sinne is ayenst the holy gost, yet natheles, for as moche as bountee apperteineth proprely to the holy gost, and envie cometh proprely of malice, therfore it is proprely ayenst the bountee of the holy Gost. Now hath malice two spices, that is to say, hardinesse of herte in wickednesse, or elles the flesh of man is so blind, that he considereth not that he is in sinne, or recketh not that he is in sinne; which is the hardinesse of the divel. That other spice of envie is, whan that a man werrieth trouth, whan he wot that it is trouth, and also whan he werrieth the grace of God that God hath yeve to his neighbour: and all this is by envie. Certes than is envie the werst sinne that is; for sothly all other sinnes be

[1] Goodness. [2] Detracts from. [3] Aristotle.

ntime only ayenst on special vertue: but certes envie ayenst al maner vertues and alle goodnesse; for it is sory all bountee of his neighbour: and in this maner it is vers from all other sinnes; for wel unnethe[1] is ther any nne that it ne hath som delit in himself, save only envie, nat ever hath in himself anguish and sorwe. The spices f envie ben these. Ther is first sorwe of other mennes oodnesse and of hir prosperitee; and prosperitee ought o be kindly mater of joye; than is envie a sinne ayenst inde. The seconde spice of envie is joye of other mennes arme; and that is proprely like to the divel, that ever ejoyseth him of mannes harme. Of thise two spices ometh backbiting; and this sinne of backbiting or deracting hath certain spices, as thus: som man preiseth his neighbour by a wicked entente, for he maketh alway a wicked knotte at the laste ende: alway he maketh a *but* at the last ende, that is digne of more blame, than is worth all the preising. The second spice is, that if a man be good, or doth or sayth a thing to good entente, the backbiter wol turne all that goodnesse up so doun to his shrewde entente. The thridde is to amenuse the bountee of his neighbour. The fourthe spice of backbiting is this, that if men speke goodnesse of a man, than wol the backbiter say; Parfay swiche a man is yet better than he; in dispreising of him that men preise. The fifth spice is this, for to consent gladly to herken the harme that men speke of other folk. This sinne is ful gret, and ay encreseth after the wicked entent of the backbiter. After backbiting cometh grutching or murmurance, and somtime it springeth of impatience ayenst God, and somtime ayenst man. Ayenst God it is whan a man grutcheth ayenst the peine of helle, or ayenst poverte, or losse of catel, or ayenst rain or tempest, or elles grutcheth that shrewes[2] have prosperitee, or elles that good men have adversitee: and all thise thinges shuld men suffre patiently, for they comen by the rightful jugement and ordinance of God. Somtime cometh grutching of avarice, as Judas grutched ayenst the Magdeleine, whan she anointed the hed of our Lord Jesu Crist with hire precious oynement. This maner murmuring is swiche as whan man grutcheth of goodnesse that himself doth, or that other folk don of hir owen catel.[3] Somtime cometh

[1] *I.e.*, scarcely is there. [2] Ill-natured, ill-tempered people.
[3] Out of their own means.

murmur of pride, as whan Simon the Pharisee grudde ayenst the Magdeleine, whan she approched to Jesu Cris and wept at his feet for hire sinnes: and somtime i sourdeth of envie, whan men discover a mannes harme tha was privee, or bereth him on hond[1] thing that is fals Murmur also is oft among servants, that grutchen wha hir soveraines bidden hem do leful[2] thinges; and for a moche as they dare not openly withsay the commaunde ment of hir soveraines, yet wol they say harme and grutch and murmure prively for veray despit; which wordes the call the divels *Pater noster*, though so be that the divel ha never *Pater noster*, but that lewed folke yeven it swich a name. Somtime it cometh of ire or privee hate, tha norisheth rancour in the herte, as afterward I shal declare Than cometh eke bitternesse of herte, thurgh which bitter nesse every good dede of his neighbour semeth to him bitter and unsavory. Than cometh discord that un bindeth all maner of frendship. Than cometh scorning of his neighbour, al do he never so wel. Than comet accusing, as whan a men seketh occasion to annoyen his neighbour, which is like the craft of the divel, that waiteth both day and night to accusen us all. Than comet malignitee, thurgh which a man annoieth his neighbour prively if he may, and if he may not, algate his wicked wi shal not let, as for to brenne his hous prively, or enpoison him, or sle his bestes, and semblable thinges.

Remedium Invidiæ.

Now wol I speke of the remedie ayenst this foule sinne of envie. Firste is the love of God principally, and loving of his neighbour as himself: for sothly that on ne may not be without that other. And trust wel, that in the name of thy neighbour thou shalt understande the name of thy brother; for certes all we have on fader fleshly, and on moder; that is to say, Adam and Eve; and also on fader spirituel, that is to say, God of heven. Thy neighbour art thou bounde for to love, and will him all goodnesse, and therfore sayth God; Love thy neighbour as thyself; that is to say, to salvation both of lif and soule. And moreover thou shalt love him in word, and in benigne amonesting[3] and chastising, and comfort him in his anoyes, and praye

[1] Deceiveth him with. [2] Lawful. [3] Admonishing.

for him with all thy herte. And in dede thou shalt love him in swiche wise that thou shalt do to him in charitee, as thou woldest that it were don to thin owen person: and therfore thou ne shalt do him no damage in wicked word, ne harme in his body, ne in his catel, ne in his soule by entising of wicked ensample. Thou shalt not desire his wif, ne non of his thinges. Understonde eke that in the name of neighbour is comprehended his enemy: certes man shal love his enemy for the commandment of God, and sothly thy frend thou shalt love in God. I say thin enemy shalt thou love for Goddes sake, by his commandement: for if it were reson that man shulde hate his enemy, forsoth God n'olde not receive us to his love that ben his enemies. Ayenst three maner of wronges, that his enemy doth to him, he shal do three things, as thus: ayenst hate and rancour of herte, he shal love him in herte: ayenst chiding and wicked wordes, he shal pray for his enemy: ayenst the wicked dede of his enemy he shal do him bountee. For Crist sayth: Love your enemies, and prayeth for hem that speke you harme, and for hem that chasen and pursuen you: and do bountee to hem that haten you. Lo, thus comandeth us our Lord Jesu Crist to do to our enemies: forsoth nature driveth us to love our frendes, and parfay our enemies have more nede of love than our frendes, and they that more nede have, certes to hem shal men do goodnesse. And certes in thilke dede have we remembrance of the love of Jesu Crist that died for his enemies: and in as moche as thilke love is more grevous to performe, so moche is more gret the merite, and therfore the loving of our enemy hath confounded the venime of the divel. For right as the divel is confounded by humilitee, right so is he wounded to the deth by the love of our enemy: certes than is love the medicine that casteth out the venime of envie fro mannes herte.

De Ira.

After envy wol I declare of the sinne of Ire: for sothly who so hath envy upon his neighbour, anon communly wol finde him mater of wrath in word or in dede ayenst him to whom he hath envie. And as wel cometh Ire of pride as of envie, for sothly he that is proude or envious is lightly[1] wroth.

[1] Easily.

This sinne of Ire, after the discriving[1] of Seint Augustin is wicked will to be avenged by word or by dede. Ire after the Philosophre, is the fervent blode of man yquicken in his herte, thurgh which he wold harme to him that he hateth: for certes the herte of man by enchaufing and meving of his blood waxeth so troubled, that it is out of all maner jugement of reson. But ye shul understond that Ire is in two maners, that on of hem is good, and that other is wicked. The good ire is by jalousie of goodnesse thurgh the which man is wroth with wickednesse, and again wickednesse. And therfore saith the wise man, that ire is better than play. This ire is with debonairtee, and it is wrothe without bitternesse: not wrothe ayenst the man, but wrothe with the misdede of the man: as saith the Prophet David; *Irascimini, et nolite peccare.* Now understond that wicked ire is in two maners, that is to say, soden ire or hasty ire without avisement and consenting of reson: the mening and the sense of this is, that the reson of a man ne consenteth not to that soden ire, and than is it venial. Another ire is that is ful wicked, that cometh of felonie of herte, avised and cast before, with wicked wil to do vengeance, and therto his reson consenteth: and soothe this is dedly sinne. This ire is so displesant to God, that it troubleth his hous, and chaseth the holy Gost out of mannes soule, and wasteth and destroyeth that likenesse of God, that is to say, the vertue that is in mannes soule, and putteth in him the likenesse of the devil, and benimeth the man fro God that is his rightful Lord. This ire is ful gret plesance to the devil, for it is the devils forneis that he enchaufeth with the fire of helle. For certes right so as fire is more mighty to destroie erthly thinges, than any other element, right so ire wol evermore quicken ayen, whan it is touched with pride that is covered in mannes herte. For certes fire ne may not come out of no thing, but if it were first in the same thing naturelly as fire is drawne out of flintes with stele. And right so as pride is many times mater of ire, right so is rancour norice and keper of ire. Ther is a maner tree, as sayth Seint Isidore, that whan men make a fire of the saide tree, and

[1] Definition. [2] Burning embers. [3] Again.

over the coles of it with ashen, sothly the fire therof wol ast all a yere or more: and right so fareth it of rancour, vhan it is ones conceived in the herte of som men, certes t wol lasten peraventure from on Easterne day until nother Easterne day, or more. But certes the same man s ful fer from the mercie of God all thilke while.

In this foresaid devils forneis ther forgen three shrewes; pride, that ay bloweth and encreseth the fire by chiding and wicked wordes: than stondeth envie, and holdeth the hot yren upon the herte of man, with a pair of longe tonges of longe rancour: and than stondeth the sinne of contumelie or strif and cheste,[1] and battereth and forgeth by vilains reprevinges.[2] Certes this cursed sinne annoyeth both to the man himself, and eke his neighbour. For sothly almost all the harme or damage that ony man doth to his neighbour cometh of wrath: for certes, outrageous wrathe doth all that ever the foule fende willeth or commandeth him; for he ne spareth neyther for our Lord Jesu Crist, ne his swete moder; and in his outrageous anger and ire, alas! alas! ful many on at that time, feleth in his herte ful wickedly, both of Crist, and also of all his halwes. Is not this a cursed vice? Yes certes. Alas! it benimmeth[3] fro man his witte and his reson, and all his debonaire lif spirituel, that shuld kepe his soule. Certes it benimmeth also Goddes due lordship (and that is mannes soule) and the love of his neighbours: it striveth also all day ayenst trouth; it reveth[4] him the quiet of his herte, and subverteth his soule.

Of ire comen thise stinking engendrures; first, hate, that is olde wrath: discord, thurgh which a man forsaketh his olde frend that he hath loved ful long: and than cometh werre, and every maner of wrong that a man doth to his neighbour in body or in catel.[5] Of this cursed sinne of ire cometh eke manslaughter. And understondeth wel that homicide (that is, manslaughter) is in divers wise. Som maner of homicide is spirituel, and som is bodily. Spirituel manslaughter is in six thinges. First, by hate, as sayth St. John: He that hateth his brother, is an homicide. Homicide is also by backbiting; of which backbitours sayth Salomon, that they have two swerdes, with which they slay hir neighbours: for sothly as wicked it is to benime of him his good name as his lif. Homicide is also in yeving

[1] Debate. [2] Retorts, recriminationes.
[3] Taketh away. [4] Bereaveth. [5] Goods.

of wicked conseil by fraude, as for to yeve conseil to axen wrongful customes and talages; of which sayth Salomon A lion roring, and a bere hungrie, ben like to cruel Lordes in withholding or abregging of the hire or of the wages of servantes, or elles in usurie, or in withdrawing of the almesse of poure folk. For which the wise man sayth Fedeth him that almost dieth for honger; for sothly but if thou fede him thou sleest him. And all thise ben deedly sinnes. Bodily manslaughter is whan thou sleest him with thy tonge in other maner, as whan thou commandest to sle a man, or elles yevest conseil to sle a man. Manslaughter in dede is in foure maners. That on is by lawful right as a justice dampneth him that is culpable to the deth: but let the justice beware that he do it rightfully and that he do it not for delit to spill blood, but for keping of rightwisenesse. Another homicide is don for necessitee, as whan a man sleeth another in his defense and that he ne may non other wise escapen fro his owne deth: but certain, and[2] he may escape withouten slaughter of his adversarie, he doth sinne, and he shal bere penance as for deedly sinne. Also if a man by cas or aventure sheteth an arowe or cast a stone, with which he sleeth a man, he is an homicide. And if a woman by negligence overlyeth hire child in hire slepe, it is homicide and deedly sinne. Also whan a man disturbleth conception of a childe, and maketh a woman barein by drinkes of venimous herbes, thurgh which she may not conceive, or sleeth hire child by drinkes, or elles putteth certain material thing in hire secret place to sle hire child, or elles doth unkinde sinne, by which man, or woman, shedeth his nature in place ther as a childe may not be conceived: or elles if a woman hath conceived, and hurteth hireself, and by that mishappe the childe is slaine, yet is it homicide. What say we eke of women that murderen hire children for drede of worldly shame? Certes, it is an horrible homicide. Eke if a man approche to a woman by desir of lecherie, thurgh which the childe is perished; or elles smiteth a woman wetingly, thurgh which she leseth hire child; all thise ben homicides, and horrible deedly sinnes. Yet comen ther of ire many mo sinnes, as wel in worde, as in thought and in dede; as he that arretteth upon[4] God, or blameth God of the thing of which he is himself gilty; or despiseth God

[1] Unless. [2] If. [3] Shoot. [4] Imputeth to.

ud all his halwes, as don thise cursed hasardours[1] in ivers contrees. This cursed sinne don they, whan they elen in hir herte ful wickedly of God and of his halwes: lso whan they treten unreverently the sacrament of the uter, thilke sinne is so gret, that unneth it may be relesed, ut that the mercy of God passeth all his werkes, it is so ret, and he so benigne. Than cometh also of ire attry nger, whan a man is sharply amonested[2] in his shrift to eve his sinne, than wol he be angry, and answere hokerly[3] nd angerly, to defend or excusen his sinne by unstedfastnesse of his fleshe; or elles he did it for to hold compagnie with his felawes; or elles he sayeth the fend enticed him; or elles he did it for his youthe; or elles his complexion is so corageous that he may not forbere; or elles it is his destinee, he sayth, unto a certain age; or elles he sayth it cometh him of gentilnesse of his auncestres, and semblable thinges. All thise maner of folke so wrappen hem in hir sinnes, that they ne wol not deliver hemself; for sothly, no wight that excuseth himself wilfully of his sinne, may not be delivered of his sinne, til that he mekely beknoweth[4] his sinne. After this than cometh swering, that is expresse ayenst the commandement of God: and that befalleth often of anger and of ire. God sayth; Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord God in idel.[5] Also our Lord Jesu Crist sayth by the word of Seint Mathew: Ne shal ye not swere in all manere, neyther by heven, for it is Goddes trone: ne by erthe, for it is the benche of his feet: ne by Jerusalem, for it is the citee of a gret King: ne by thin hed, for thou ne mayst not make an here white ne black: but he sayth, be your word, ye, ye, nay, nay; and what that is more, it is of evil. Thus sayth Crist. For Cristes sake swere not so sinnefully, in dismembring of Crist, by soule, herte, bones, and body: for certes it semeth, that ye thinken that the cursed Jewes dismembred him not ynough, but ye dismembre him more. And if so be that the lawe compell you to swere, than reuleth you[6] after the lawe of God in your swering, as sayth Jeremie; Thou shalt kepe three conditions; thou shalt swere in trouth, in dome,[7] and in rightwisenesse. This is to say, thou shalt swere soth; for every lesing[8] is ayenst Crist; for Crist is veray trouth: and thinke wel this, that every gret swerer, not

[1] Gamesters. [2] Admonished.
[3] Frowardly. [4] Acknowledgeth. [5] Vain, idly.
[6] Be ye guided. [7] Judgment. [8] Lying.

compelled lawfully to swere, the plage shal not depart his hous, while he useth unleful swering. Thou shalt swer also in dome, whan thou art constreined by the domesman[1] to witnesse a trouth. Also thou shalt not swere for envie neyther for favour, ne for mede, but only for rightwisnesse, and for declaring of trouthe to the honour and worship of God, and to the aiding and helping of thy even[2] Cristen. And therfore every man that taketh Goddes name in idel, or falsely swereth with his mouth, or elles taketh on him the name of Crist, to be called a Cristen man, and liveth agenst Cristes living and his teching: alle they take Goddes name in idel. Loke also what sayth Seint Peter; *Actuum* iv. *Non est aliud nomen sub cælo*, &c. Ther is non other name (sayth Seint Peter) under heven yeven to men, in which they may be saved; that is to say but the name of Jesu Crist. Take kepe[3] eke how precious is the name of Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Poule, *ad Philipenses* ii. *In nomine Jesu*, &c. that in the name of Jesu every knee of hevenly creature, or erthly, or of helle, shal bowen; for it is so high and so worshipful, that the cursed fend in helle shuld tremble for to here it named. Thus semeth it, that men that swere so horribly by his blessed name, that they despise it more boldely than did the cursed Jewes, or elles the divel, that trembleth whan he heren his name.

Now certes, sith that swering (but if it be lawfully don) is so highly defended, moche worse is for to swere falsely, and eke nedeles.

What say we eke of hem that deliten hem in swering, and hold it a genterie or manly dede to swere gret othes? And what of hem that of veray usage ne cese not to swere gret othes, al be the cause not worth a strawe? Certes this is horrible sinne. Swering sodenly without avisement is also a gret sinne. But let us go now to that horrible swering of adjuration and conjuration, as don thise false enchauntours and nigromancers in basins ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fire, or in a sholder bone of a shepe: I cannot sayn, but that they do cursedly and damnably ayenst Crist, and all the feith of holy chirche.

What say we of hem that beleven on divinales,[4] as by

[1] Judge. [2] Fellow.
[3] Heed. [4] Divinations.

flight or by noise of briddes or of bestes, or by sorte of geomancie, by dremes, by chirking[1] of dores, or craking of houses, by gnawing of rattes, and swiche maner wretchednesse? Certes, all thise thinges ben defended[2] by God and holy chirche, for which they ben accursed, till they come to amendement, that on swiche filth set hir beleve. Charmes for woundes, or for maladies of men or of bestes, if they take any effect, it may be peraventure that God suffreth it, for folk shuld yeve the more feith and reverence to his name.

Now wol I speak of lesinges,[3] which generally is false signifiance of word, in entent to deceive his even[4] Cristen. Some lesing is, of which ther cometh non avantage to no wight; and som lesing turneth to the profite and ese of a man, and to the dammage of another man. Another lesing is, for to saven his lif or his catel. Another lesing cometh of delit for to lie, in which delit, they wol forge a long tale, and peint it with all circumstances, wher all the ground of the tale is false. Some lesing cometh, for he wol sustein his word:[5] and som lesing cometh of recchelesnesse withouten avisement, and semblable thinges.

Let us now touche the vice of flaterie, which ne cometh not gladly, but for drede, or for covetise. Flaterie is generally wrongful preising. Flaterers ben the devils nourices, that nourish his children with milke of losengerie. Forsoth Salomon sayth, That flaterie is werse than detraction: for somtime detraction maketh an hautein[6] man be the more humble, for he dredeth detraction, but certes flaterie maketh a man to enhaunce his herte and his contenance. Flaterers ben the devils enchauntours, for they maken a man to wenen[7] himself be like that he is not like. They be like to Judas, that betrayed God; and thise flaterers betrayen man to selle him to his enemy, that is the devil. Flaterers ben the devils chappeleines, that ever singen *Placebo*. I reken flaterie in the vices of ire: for oft time if a man be wroth with another, than wol he flater som wight, to susteine him in his quarrel.

Speke we now of swiche cursing as cometh of irous[8] herte. Malison generally may be said every maner power of harme: swiche cursing bereveth man the regne of God,

1. Creaking. 2 Forbidden. 3 Lyings.
4 Fellow. 5 *I.e.*, corroborate a falsehood already uttered.
6 Haughty. 7 Think. 8 Wrathful.

as sayth Seint Poule. And oft time swiche cursing wrongfully retorneth again to him that curseth, as a bird retorneth again to his owen nest. And over all thing men ought eschew to curse hir children, and to yeve to the devil hir engendrure, as fer forth as in hem is; certes it is a grete peril and a grete sinne.

Let us than speke of chiding and repreving, which ben ful grete woundes in mannes herte, for they unsow the seames of frendship in mannes herte: for certes, unnethe may a man be plainely accorded with him, that he hath openly reviled, repreved, and disclaundred:[1] this is a full grisly sinne, as Crist sayth in the Gospel. And take ye kepe now, that he that repreveth his neighbour, either he repreveth him by som harme of peine, that he hath upon his bodie, as, Mesel,[2] croked harlot; or by som sinne that he doth. Now if he repreve him by harme of peine, than turneth the repreve to Jesu Crist: for peine is sent by the rightwise sonde[3] of God, and by his suffrance, be it meselrie, or maime, or maladie: and if he repreve him uncharitably of sinne, as, thou holour,[4] thou dronkelewe harlot, and so forth; than apperteineth that to the rejoicing of the devil, which ever hath joye that men don sinne. And certes, chiding may not come but out of a vilains herte, for after the haboundance of the herte speketh the mouth ful oft. And ye shul understond, that loke by any way, whan ony man chastiseth another, that he beware fro chiding or repreving: for trewely, but he beware, he may ful lightly quicken the fire of anger and of wrath, which he shuld quench: and peraventure sleth him, that he might chastise with benignitee. For, as sayth Salomon, the amiable tonge is the tree of lif; that is to say, of lif spirituel. And sothly, a dissolute tonge sleth the spirit of him that repreveth, and also of him which is repreved. Lo, what sayth Seint Augustine: Ther is nothing so like the devils child, as he which oft chideth. A servant of God behoveth not to chide. And though that chiding be a vilains thing betwix all maner folk, yet it is certes most uncovenable betwene a man and his wif, for ther is never rest. And therfore sayth Salomon; An hous that is uncovered in rayn and dropping, and a chiding wif, ben like. A man, which is in a drop-

[1] Slandered.
[2] Thou leper!
[3] Sending, *i.e.*, will.
[4] Whoremonger.

ping hous in many places, though he eschew the dropping in o place, it droppeth on him in another place: so fareth it by a chiding wif; if she chide him not in o place, she wol chide him in another: and therfore, better is a morsel of bred with joye, than an hous filled ful of delices with chiding, sayth Salomon. And Seint Poule sayth; O ye women, beth ye subgettes to your husbonds, as you behoveth in God; and ye men loveth your wives.

Afterward speke we of scorning, which is a wicked sinne, and namely, whan he scorneth a man for his good werkes: for certes, swiche scorners faren like the foule tode, that may not endure to smell the swete savour of the vine, whan it flourisheth. Thise scorners ben parting felawes[1] with the devil, for they have joye whan the devil winneth, and sorwe if he leseth. They ben adversaries to Jesu Crist, for they hate that he loveth; that is to say, salvation of soule.

Speke we now of wicked conseil, for he that wicked conseil yeveth is a traitour, for he deceiveth him that trusteth in him. But natheles, yet is wicked conseil first ayenst himself: for, as sayth the wise man, every false living hath this propertee in himself, that he that wol annoy another man, he annoyeth first himself. And men shul understond, that man shal not take his conseil of false folk, ne of angry folk, or grevous folk, ne of folk that loven specially hir owen profit, ne of to moche worldly folk, namely, in conseiling of mannes soule.

Now cometh the sinne of hem that maken discord among folk, which is a sinne that Crist hateth utterly; and no wonder is; for he died for to make concord. And more shame don they to Crist, than did they that him crucified: for God loveth better, that frendship be amonges folk, than he did his owen body, which that he yave for unitee. Therfore ben they likened to the devil, that ever is about to make discord.

Now cometh the sinne of Double tonge, swiche as speke faire before folk, and wickedly behind: or elles they make semblaunt as though they spake of good entention, or elles in game and play, and yet they speken of wicked entente.

Now cometh bewreying[2] of conseil, thurgh which a man is defamed: certes unnethe may he restore the damage. Now cometh manace, that is an open folie: for he that oft

[1] Partners. [2] Betraying.

manaceth, he threteth more than he may performe ful oft time. Now comen idel wordes, that be without profite of him that speketh the wordes, and eke of him that herkeneth the wordes: or elles idel wordes ben tho that ben nedeles, or without entente of naturel profit. And al be it that idel wordes be somtime venial sinne, yet shuld men doute hem, for we shul yeve rekening of hem before God. Now cometh jangling, that may not come withouten sinne: and as sayth Salomon, it is a signe of apert folie. And therfore a philosophre sayd, whan a man axed him how that he shuld plese the peple, he answered; Do many good werkes, and speke few jangelinges. After this cometh the sinne of japeres, that ben the devils apes, for they make folk to laugh at hir japerie, as folk don at the gandes[1] of an ape: swiche japes defendeth Seint Poule. Loke how that vertuous wordes and holy comforten hem that travaillen in the service of Crist, right so comforten the vilains words, and the knakkes of japeres, hem that travaillen in the service of the devil. Thise ben the sinnes of the tonge, that comen of ire, and other sinnes many mo.

Remedium Iræ.

The remedie ayenst Ire, is a vertue that cleped is mansuetude, that is Debonairtee: and eke another vertue, that men clepen patience or sufferaunce.

Debonairtee withdraweth and refreineth the stirrings and mevings of mannes corage in his herte, in swich maner, that they ne skip not out by anger ne ire. Sufferance suffereth swetely all the annoyance and the wrong that is don to man outward. Seint Jerome sayth this of debonairtee, That it doth no harme to no wight, ne sayth: ne for no harme that men do ne say, he ne chafeth not ayenst reson. This vertue somtime cometh of nature; for, as sayth the philosophre, a man is a quick thing, by nature debonaire, and tretable to goodnesse: but whan debonairtee is enformed of grace, than it is the more worth.

Patience is another remedy ayenst ire, and is a vertue that suffereth swetely every mannes goodnesse, and is not wroth for non harme that is don to him. The philosophre sayth, that patience is the vertue that suffreth debonairly

[1] Tricks.

al the outrage of adversitee, and every wicked word. This vertue maketh a man like to God, and maketh him Goddes owen childe: as sayth Crist. This vertue discomfiteth thin enemies. And therfore sayth the wise man; if thou wolt vanquish thin enemie, see thou be patient. And thou shalt understond, that a man suffereth foure maner of grevances in outward thinges, ayenst the which foure he must have foure maner of patiences.

The first grevance is of wicked wordes. Thilke grevance suffred Jesu Crist, without grutching, ful patiently, whan the Jewes despised him and repreved him ful oft. Suffer thou therfore patiently, for the wise man saith: if thou strive with a foole, though the foole be wroth, or though he laugh, algate[1] thou shalt have no reste. That other grevance outward is to have domage of thy catel. Therayenst suffed Crist ful patiently, whan he was despoiled of al that hrehad in this lif, and that n'as but his clothes. The thridde grevance is a man to have harme in his body. That suffred Crist ful patiently in all his passion. The fourthe grevance is in outrageous labour in werkes: wherfore I say, that folk that make hir servants to travaile to grevously, or out of time, as in holy dayes, sothly they do gret sinne. Hereayenst suffred Crist ful patiently, and taught us patience, whan he bare upon his blessed sholders the crosse, upon which he shuld suffer despitous deth. Here may men lerne to be patient; for certes, not only cristen men be patient for love of Jesu Crist, and for guerdon of the blisful lif that is perdurable, but certes the old Payenes, that never were cristened, commendeden and useden the vertue of patience.

A philosophre upon a time, that wold have beten his disciple for his gret trespas, for which he was gretly meved, and brought a yerde[2] to bete the childe, and whan this child sawe the yerde, he sayd to his maister: what thinke ye to do? I wol bete thee, sayd the maister, for thy correction. Forsoth, sayd the child, ye ought first correct yourself, that have iost all your patience for the offence of a child. Forsooth, sayd the maister all weping, thou sayest soth: have thou the yerde, my dere sone, and correct me for min impatience. Of patience cometh obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist, and to all hem to which he ought to be obedient in Crist. And

[1] Nevertheless. [2] Staff.

understand wel, that obedience is parfite, whan that a man doth gladly and hastily, with good herte entirely, all that he shuld do. Obedience generally, is to performe hastily the doctrine of God, and of his soveraines, to which him ought to be obeisant in all rightwisenesse.

De Accidia.[1]

After the sinne of wrath, now wol I speke of the sinne of accidie, or slouth: for envie blindeth the herte of a man, and ire troubleth a man, and accidie maketh him hevy, thoughtful,[2] and wrawe.[3] Envie and ire maken bitternesse in herte, which bitternesse is mother of accidie, and benimeth him the love of all goodnesse; than is accidie the anguish of a trouble herte. And Seint Augustine sayth: It is annoye of goodnesse and annoye of harme. Certes this is a damnable sinne, for it doth wrong to Jesu Crist, in as moche as it benimeth the service that men shulde do to Crist with alle diligence, as sayth Salomon: but accidie doth non swiche diligence. He doth all thing with annoye, and with wrawnesse,[4] slaknesse, and excusation, with idelnesse and unlust.[5] For which the book sayth: Accursed be he that doth the service of God negligently. Than is accidie enemie to every estate of man. For certes the estate of man is in three maners: either it is the estate of innocence, as was the estate of Adam, before that he felle into sinne, in which estate he was holden to werk, as in herying and adoring of God. Another estate is the estate of sinful men: in which estate men ben holden to labour in praying to God, for amendement of hir sinnes, and that he wold graunt hem to rise out of hir sinnes. Another estate is the estate of grace, in which estate he is holden to werkes of penitence: and certes, to all thise thinges is accidie enemie and contrary, for he loveth no besinesse at all. Now certes, this foule sinne of accidie is eke a ful gret enemie to the livelode of the body; for it ne hath no purveaunce ayenst temporel necessitee; for it forsleutheth,[6] forsluggeth, and destroieth all goodes temporel by recchelesnesse.

[1] Negligence arising from vexation or melancholy
[2] *I.e.*, thoughtful in a bad sense, brooding, gloomy.
[3] Peevish.
[4] Peevishness.
[5] Without good will.
[6] Loseth through sloth.

The fourth thing is that accidie is like hem that ben in the peine of helle, because of hir slouthe and of hir hevinesse: for they that be damned, ben so bound, that they may neyther do wel ne think wel. Of accidie cometh first, that a man is annoied and accombred to do any goodnesse, and that maketh that God hath abhomination of swiche accidie, as sayth Seint John.

Now cometh slouthe, that wol not suffre no hardnesse ne no penance: for sothly, slouthe is so tendre and so delicat, as sayth Salomon, that he wol suffre non hardnesse ne penance, and therfore he shendeth[1] all that he doth. Ayenst this roten sinne of accidie and slouthe shuld men exercise hemself, and use hemself to do good werkes, and manly and vertuously cachen corage wel to do, thinking that our Lord Jesu Crist quiteth every good deed, be it never so lite. Usage of labour is a gret thing: for it maketh, as sayth Seint Bernard, the labourer to have strong armes and hard sinewes: and slouthe maketh hem feble and tendre. Than cometh drede for to beginne to werke any good werkes: for certes, he that enclineth to sinne, him thinketh it is to gret an emprise for to undertake the werkes of goodnesse, and casteth in his herte that the circumstances of goodnesse ben so grevous and so chargeant for to suffre, that he dare not undertake to do werkes of goodnesse, as sayth Seint Gregorie.

Now cometh wanhope, that is. despeir of the mercy of God, that cometh somtime of to moche outrageous sorwe, and somtime of to moche drede, imagining that he hath do so moche sinne, that it wolde not availe him, though he wolde repent him, and forsake sinne: thurgh which despeire or drede, he abandoneth all his herte to every maner sinne, as sayth Seint Augustine. Which dampnable sinne, if it continue unto his end, it is cleped the sinne of the holy gost. This horrible sinne is so perilous, that he that is despeired, ther n'is no felonie, ne no sinne, that he douteth for to do, as shewed wel by Judas. Certes, aboven all sinnes than is this sinne most displesant and most adversarie to Crist. Sothly, he that despeireth him, is like to the coward champion recreant, that flieth withouten nede. Alas! alas! nedeles is he recreant, and nedeles despeired. Certes, the mercy of God is ever redy to the penitent person, and is above all his werkes. Alas!

[1] Ruineth.

cannot a man bethinke him on the Gospel of Seint Luke, chap. xv., wheras Crist sayeth, that as wel shal ther be joye in heven upon a sinful man that doth penitence, as upon ninety and nine rightful men that neden no penitence? Loke further, in the same Gospel, the joye and the feste of the good man that had lost his sone, whan his sone was retourned with repentance to his fader. Can they not remembre hem also, (as sayth Seint Luke, chap. xxiii.) how that the thefe that was honged beside Jesu Crist, sayd, Lord, remembre on me, whan thou comest in thy regne? Forsoth, said Crist, I say to thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradis. Certes, ther is non so horrible sinne of man, that he may in his lif be destroyed by penitence, thurgh vertue of the passion and of the deth of Crist. Alas! what nedeth man than to be despeired, sith that his mercy is so redy and large? Axe and have. Than cometh sompnolence, that is, sluggy slumbring, which maketh a man hevy, and dull in body and in soule, and this sinne cometh of slouthe: and certes, the time that by way of reson man shuld not slepe, is by the morwe, but if ther were cause resonable. For sothly in the morwe tide is most covenable[1] to a man to say his prayers, and for to think on God, and to honour God, and to yeve almesse to the poure that comen first in the name of Jesu Crist. Lo, what sayth Salomon? Who so wol by the morwe awake to seke me, he shal find me. Than cometh negligence or recchelesnesse that recketh of nothing. And though that ignorance be mother of all harmes, certes, negligence is the norice. Negligence ne doth no force, whan he shal do a thing, whether he do it wel or badly.

The remedie of thise two sinnes is, as sayth the wise man, that he that dredeth God, spareth not to do that him ought to do; and he that loveth God, he wol do diligence to plese God by his werkes, and abandon himself, with all his might, wel for to do. Than cometh idelnesse, that is the yate[2] of all harmes. An idel man is like to a place that hath no walles; theras deviles may enter on every side, or shoot at him at discoverte[3] by temptation on every side. This idelnesse is the thurrok[4] of all wicked and vilains thoughtes, and of all jangeles, trifles, and all ordure. Certes heven is yeven to hem that will labour, and not to

[1] Fitting.
[2] Gate.
[3] Uncovered.
[4] Hold.

idel folk. Also David sayth, they ne be not in the labour of men, ne they shul not ben whipped with men, that is to say, in purgatorie. Certes than semeth it they shul ben tormented with the devil in helle, but if they do penance.

Than cometh the sinne that men clepen *Tarditas*, as whan a man is latered,[1] or taryed or he wol tourne to God: and certes, that is a gret folie. He is like him that falleth in the diche, and wol not arise. And this vice cometh of false hope, that thinketh that he shal live long, but that hope failleth ful oft.

Than cometh Lachesse,[2] that is, he that whan he beginneth any good werk, anon he wol forlete it and stint, as don they that have any wight to governe, and ne take of him no more kepe, anon as they find any contrary or any annoy. Thise ben the newe shepherdes, that let hir shepe wetingly go renne to the wolf, that is in the breres, and do no force of hir owen governance. Of this cometh poverte and destruction, both of spirituel and temporel thinges. Than cometh a maner coldnesse, that freseth all the herte of man. Than cometh undevotion, thurgh which a man is so blont, as sayth Seint Bernard, and hath swiche langour in his soule, that he may neyther rede ne sing in holy chirche, ne here ne thinke of no devotion, ne travaile with his hondes in no good werk, that it n'is to him unsavory and all apalled. Than wexeth he sluggish and slombry, and sone wol he be wroth, and sone is enclined to hate and to envie. Than cometh the sinne of worldly sorwe swiche as is cleped *Tristitia*, that sleth a man, as sayth Seint Poule. For certes swiche sorwe werketh to the deth of the soule and of the body also, for therof cometh, that a man is annoied of his owen lif. Wherfore swiche sorwe shorteth the lif of many a man, or that his time is come by way of kinde.[3]

Remedium Accidiæ.

Ayenst this horrible sinne of accidie, and the braunches of the same, ther is a vertue that is called *fortitudo* or strength, that is, an affection, thurgh which a man despiseth noyous[4] thinges. This vertue is so mighty and so vigorous, that it dare withstond mightily, and wrastle ayenst

[1] Delayed.
[2] Slackness.
[3] Nature.
[4] Noisome, vexatious.

the assautes of the devil, and wisely kepe himself fro perils that ben wicked; for it enhaunseth and enforceth the soule, right as accidie abateth and maketh it feble: for this *fortitudo* may endure with long sufferance the travailles that ben covenable.

This vertue hath many spices; the first is cleped magnanimitee, that is to say, gret corage. For certes ther behoveth gret corage ayenst accidie, lest that it swalowe the soule by the sinne of sorwe, or destroy it with wanhope. Certes, this vertue maketh folk to undertake hard and grevous thinges by hir owen will, wisely and resonably. And for as moche as the devil fighteth ayenst man more by queintise[1] and sleight than by strength, therfore shal a man withstond him by wit, by reson, and by discretion. Than ben ther the vertues of feith, and hope in God and in his seintes, to acheven and accomplice the good werkes, in the which he purposeth fermely to continue. Than cometh seuretee or sikernesse,[2] and that is whan a man ne douteth no travaile in time coming of the good werkes that he hath begonne. Than cometh magnificence, that is to say, whan a man doth and performeth gret werkes of goodnesse, that he hath begonne, and that is the end why that men shuld do good werkes. For in the accomplishing of good werkes lieth the gret guerdon. Than is ther constance, that is stablenesse of corage, and this shuld be in herte by stedfast feith, and in mouth, and in bering, in chere, and in dede. Eke ther ben mo special remedies ayenst accidie, in divers werkes, and in consideration of the peines of helle and of the joyes of heven, and in trust of the grace of the holy gost, that will yeve him might to performe his good entent.

De Avaritia.

After accidie wol I speke of avarice, and of coveitise. Of which sinne Seint Poule sayth: The rote of all harmes is coveitise. For sothly, whan the herte of man is confounded in itself and troubled, and that the soule hath lost the comfort of God, than seketh he an idel solas[3] of worldly thinges.

Avarice, after the description of Seint Augustine, is a likerousnesse in herte to have erthly thinges. Som other

[1] Stealthiness, craft. [2] Certainty. [3] Solace.

folk sayn, that avarice is for to purchase many erthly thinges, and nothing to yeve to hem that han nede. And understond wel, that avarice standeth not only in land ne catel,[1] but som time in science and in glorie, and in every maner outrageous thing is avarice. And the difference betwene avarice and coveitise is this: coveitise is for to coveit swiche thinges as thou hast not; and avarice is to withholde and kepe swiche thinges as thou hast, without rightful nede. Sothly, this avarice is a sinne that is ful dampnable, for all holy writ curseth it, and speketh ayenst it, for it doth wrong to Jesu Crist; for it bereveth him the love that men to him owen, and tourneth it backward ayenst all reson, and maketh that the avaricious man hath more hope in his catel than in Jesu Crist, and doth more observance in keping of his tresour, than he doth in the service of Jesu Crist. And therfore sayth Seint Poul, That an avaricious man is the thraldome of idolatrie.

What difference is ther betwix an idolastre, and an avaricious man? But that an idolastre peraventure ne hath not but o maumet[2] or two, and the avaricious man hath many: for certes, every florein in his coffre is his maumet. And certes, the sinne of maumetrie is the first that God defended[3] in the ten commandments, as bereth witnesse, *Exod. Cap.* xx. Thou shalt have no false goddes before me, ne thou shalt make to thee no graven thing. Thus is an avaricious man, that loveth his tresour before God, an idolastre. And thurgh this cursed sinne of avarice and coveitise cometh thise hard lordships, thurgh which men ben distreined by tallages, customes, and cariages, more than hir dutee or reson is: and eke take they of hir bondmen amercementes,[4] which might more resonably be called extortions than amercementes. Of which amercementes, or raunsoming of bondmen, som lordes stewardes say, that it is rightful, for as moche as a cherl hath no temporel thing, that it ne is his lordes, as they say. But certes, thise lordshippes don wrong, that bereven hir bondmen thinges that they never yave hem. *Augustinus de Civitate Dei, Libro* ix. Soth is, that the condition of thraldom, and the first cause of thraldom was for sinne. *Genesis* v.

Thus may ye see, that the gilt deserved thraldom, but not nature. Wherfore thise lordes ne shuld not to moche

[1] Goods.
[2] Idol.
[3] Forbade.
[4] Fines.

glorifie hem in hir lordshipes, sith that they by naturel condition ben not lordes of hir thralles, but that thraldom came first by the deserte of sinne. And furtherover, ther as the lawe sayth, that temporel goodes of bondfolk ben the goodes of hir lord: ye, that is for to understond, the goodes of the emperour, to defend hem in hir right, but not to robbe hem ne to reve[1] hem. Therfore sayth Seneca: The prudent shuld live benignely with the thral.[2] Tho that thou clepest thy thralles, ben Goddes peple: for humble folk ben Cristes frendes; they ben contubernial with the Lord thy king.

Thinke also, that of swiche seed as cherles springen, of swiche seed springen lordes: as wel may the cherl be saved as the Lord. The same deth that taketh the cherl, swiche deth taketh the Lord. Wherfore I rede,[3] do right so with thy cherl as thou woldest that thy Lord did with thee, if thou were in his plight. Every sinful man is a cherl to sinne: I rede thee, thou Lord, that thou reule thee in swiche wise, that thy cherles rather love thee than drede thee. I wote wel, that ther is degree above degree, as reson is, and skill is,[4] that men do hir devoir, ther as it is due: but certes, extortion, and despit of your underlinges, is dampnable.

And furthermore understond wel, that thise conqueroures or tyrantes maken ful oft thralles of hem, that ben borne of as royal blood as ben they that hem conqueren. This name of Thraldom was never erst couthe,[5] til that Noe sayd, that his sone Cham shuld be thrall to his brethren for his sinne. What say we than of hem that pille[6] and don extortions to holy Chirche? Certes, the swerd that men yeven first to a knight whan he is newe dubbed, signifieth, that he shuld defend holy Chirche, and not robbe it ne pille it: and who so doth is traitour to Crist. As saith Seint Augustine, Tho ben the devils wolves, that strangelen the shepe of Jesu Crist, and don worse than wolves: for sothly, whan the wolf hath full his wombe, he stinteth to strangle shepe: but sothly, the pillours[7] and destroiers of holy Chirches goodes ne do not so, for they ne stint never to pille. Now as I have sayd, sith so is, that sinne was first cause of thraldom, than is it thus, that at the time that

1 Take away.
2 Slave, servant.
3 Advise, say.
4 It is meet.
5 Known.
6 Pillage.
7 Pillagers.

all this world was in sinne, than was all this world in thraldom, and in subjection: but certes, sith the time of grace came, God ordeined, that som folk shuld be more high in estate and in degree, and som folk more lowe, and that everich shuld be served in his estate and his degree. And therfore in som contrees ther as they ben thralles, whan they have tourned hem to the feith, they make hir thralles free out of thraldom: and therfore certes the Lord oweth to his man, that the man oweth to the Lord. The Pope clepeth himself servant of the servants of God. But for as moche as the estate of holy Chirche ne might not have ben, ne the commun profite might not have be kept, ne peęs ne rest in erthe, but if God had ordeined, that som men have higher degree, and som men lower; therfore was soveraintee ordeined to kepe, and mainteine, and defend hire underlinges or hire subjectes in reson, as ferforth as it lieth in hire power, and not to destroy hem ne confound. Wherfore I say, that thilke lordes that ben like wolves, that devoure the possessions or the catel of poure folk wrongfully, withouten mercy or mesure, they shul receive by the same mesure that they have mesured to poure folk the mercy of Jesu Crist, but they it amende. Now cometh deceit betwix marchant and marchant. And thou shalt understond, that marchandise is in two maners, that on is bodily, and that other is gostly: that on is honest and leful,[1] and that other is dishonest and unleful. The bodily marchandise, that is leful and honest, is this: that ther as God hath ordeined, that a regne or a contree is suffisant to himself, than it is honest and leful, that of the haboundaunce of this contree men helpe another contree that is nedy: and therfore ther must be marchants to bring fro on contree to another hir marchandise. That other marchandise, that men haunten with fraude, and trecherie, and deceit, with lesinges[2] and false othes, is right cursed and dampnable. Spirituel marchandise is proprely simonie, that is, ententif[3] desire to buy thing spirituel, that is, thing which apperteineth to the seintuarie[4] of God, and to the cure of the soule. This desire, if so be that a man do his diligence to performe it, al be it that his desire ne take non effect, yet it is to him a dedly sinne: and if he be ordered, he is irreguler. Certes simonie is cleped of Simon Magus, that

[1] Lawful.
[2] Lies.
[3] Intentional.
[4] Sanctuary, holiness.

wold have bought for temporel catel the yefte that God had yeven by the holy gost to Seint Peter, and to the Apostles: and therfore understond ye, that both he that selleth and he that byeth thinges spirituel ben called Simoniackes, be it by catel, be it by procuring, or by fleshly praier of his frendes, fleshly frendes, or spirituel frendes, fleshly in two maners, as by kinrede or other frendes: sothly, if they pray for him that is not worthy and able, it is simonie, if he take the benefice; and if he be worthy and able, ther is non. That other maner is, whan man, or woman, prayeth for folk to avancen hem only for wicked fleshly affection which they have unto the persons, and that is foule simonie. But certes, in service, for which men yeven thinges spirituel unto hir servants, it must be understonde, that the service must be honest, or elles not, and also, that it be without bargaining, and that the person be able. For (as sayth Seint Damascen) all the sinnes of the world, at regard of this sinne, ben as thing of nought, for it is the gretest sinne that may be after the sinne of Lucifer and of Anticrist: for by this sinne God forleseth[1] the chirche and the soule, which he bought with his precious blood, by hem that yeven chirches to hem that ben not digne, for they put in theves, that stelen the soules of Jesu Crist, and destroyen his patrimonie. By swiche undigne preestes and curates, han lewed men lesse reverence of the sacramentes of holy chirche: and swiche yevers[2] of chirches put the children of Crist out, and put into chirches the divels owen sones: they sellen the soules that lambes shuld kepe to the wolf, which strangleth hem: and therfore shall they never have part of the pasture of lambes, that is, in the blisse of heven. Now cometh hasardrie[3] with his apertenauntes,[4] as tables and rafles, of which cometh deceit, false othes, chidings, and all raving, blaspheming, and reneying of God, hate of his neyghbours, wast of goodes, mispending of time, and somtime manslaughter. Certes, hasardours ne mow not be without grete sinne. Of avarice comen eke lesinges, theft, false witnesse, and false othes: and ye shul understonde, that these be gret sinnes, and expresse ayenst the commandements of God, as I have sayd. False witnesse is eke in word, and in dede: in word, as for to bereve thy neighbours good name by thy false witnesse, or bereve him his

[1] Entirely loseth.
[2] Such givers.
[3] Hazard.
[4] Appurtenances.

catel or his heritage by thy false witnessing, whan thou for ire, or for mede, or for envie, berest false witnesse, or accusest him, or excusest thyself falsely. Ware ye questmongers[1] and notaries: certes, for false witnessing, was Susanna in ful gret sorwe and peine, and many another mo. The sinne of theft is also expresse ayenst Goddes hest, and that in two maners, temporel, and spirituel: the temporel theft is, as for to take thy neighbours catel ayenst his will, be it by force or by sleight; be it in meting or mesure; by steling; by false enditements upon him; and in borowing of thy neighbours catel, in entent never to pay it ayen, and semblable thinges. Spirituel theft is sacrilege, that is to say, hurting of holy thinges, or of thinges sacred to Crist, in two maners; by reson of the holy place, as chirches or chirches hawes;[2] (for every vilains sinne, that men don in swiche places, may be called sacrilege, or every violence in semblable places) also they that withdrawe falsely the rentes and rightes that longen[3] to holy chirche; and plainly and generally, sacrilege is to reve[4] holy thing fro holy place, or unholy thing out of holy place, or holy thing out of unholy place.

Remedium Avaritiæ.

Now shul ye understond, that releving[5] of avarice is misericorde and pitee largely taken. And men might axe, why that misericorde and pitee are releving of avarice; certes, the avaricious man sheweth no pitee ne misericorde to the nedeful man. For he deliteth him in the keping of his tresour, and not in the rescouing ne releving of his even[6] Cristen. And therfore speke I first of misericorde. Than is misericorde (as sayth the Philosophre) a vertue, by which the corage of man is stirred by the misese[7] of him that is misesed. Upon which misericorde foloweth pitee, in performing and fulfilling of charitable werkes of mercie, helping and comforting him that is misesed. And certes, this meveth a man to misericorde of Jesu Crist, that he yave himself for our offence, and suffred deth for misericorde, and foryaf us our original sinnes, and therby relesed us fro the peine of hell, and amenused[8] the peines of purgatory by penitence, and yeveth us grace wel to do, and at

[1] Packers of juries or inquests. [2] Churchyards.
[3] Belong. [4] Take. [5] Relieving.
[6] Fellow. [7] Uneasiness. [8] Took away.

last the blisse of heven. The spices of misericorde ben for to lene,[1] and eke for to yeve, and for to forgeve and relese, and for to have pitee in herte, and compassion of the mischefe of his even Cristen, and also to chastise ther as nede is. Another maner of remedy ayenst avarice, is resonable largesse: but sothly, here behoveth the consideration of the grace of Jesu Crist, and of the temporel goodes, and also of the goodes perdurable that Jesu Crist yave to us, and to have remembrance of the deth which he shal receive, he wote not whan: and eke that he shal forgon all that he hath, save only that which he hath dispended in good werkes.

But for as moche as som folk ben unmesurable, men oughten for to avoid and eschue fool-largesse,[2] the which men clepen waste. Certes, he that is fool-large, he yeveth not his catel, but he leseth his catel. Sothly, what thing that he yeveth for vaine-glory, as to minstrals, and to folk that bere his renome in the world, he hath do sinne therof, and non almesse: certes, he leseth foule his good, that ne seketh with the yefte[3] of his good nothing but sinne. He is like to an hors that seketh rather to drink drovy[4] or troubled water, than for to drink water of the clere well. And for as moche as they yeven ther as[5] they shuld not yeven, to hem apperteineth thilke malison, that Crist shal yeve at the day of dome to hem that shul be dampned.

De Gulâ.

After avarice cometh glotonie, which is expresse ayenst the commandement of God. Glotonie is unmesurable appetit to ete or to drinke: or elles to do in ought to the unmesurable appetit and disordeined coveitise to ete or drinke. This sinne corrupted all this world, as is wel shewed in the sinne of Adam and of Eve. Loke also what sayth Seint Poule of glotonie. Many (sayth he) gon, of which I have ofte said to you, and now I say it weping, that they ben the enemies of the crosse of Crist, of which the end is deth, and of which hir wombe[6] is hir God and hir glorie; in confusion of hem that so serven erthly thinges. He that is usant[7] to this sinne of glotonie, he ne may no sinne withstond, he must be in servage of all vices,

[1] Lend. [2] Foolish liberality.
[3] Gift. [4] Dirty. [5] Give where.
[6] Belly. [7] Accustomed, given.

for it is the devils horde, ther he hideth him and resteth. This sinne hath many spices. The first is dronkennesse, that is the horrible sepulture of mannes reson: and therfore whan a man is dronke, he hath lost his reson: and this is dedly sinne. But sothly, whan that a man is not wont[1] to strong drinkes, and peraventure ne knoweth not the strength of the drinke, or hath feblenesse in his hed, or hath travailled, thurgh which he drinketh the more, al be he sodenly caught with drinke, it is no dedly sinne, but venial. The second spice of glotonie is, that the spirit of a man wexeth all trouble for dronkennesse, and bereveth a man the discretion of his wit. The thridde spice of glotonie is, whan a man devoureth his mete, and hath not rightful maner of eting. The fourthe is, whan thurgh the gret abundance of his mete, the humours in his body ben distempered. The fifthe is, foryetfulnesse by to moche drinking, for which somtime a man forgeteth by the morwe, what he did over eve.

In other maner ben distinct the spices of glotonie, after Seint Gregorie. The first is, for to ete before time. The second is, whan a man geteth him to delicat mete or drinke. The thridde is, whan men taken to moche over mesure. The fourth is curiositee,[2] with gret entent to maken and appareille his mete. The fifth is, for to ete gredily. Thise ben the five fingers of the devils hond, by which he draweth folk to the sinne.

Remedium Gulæ.

Ayenst glotonie the remedie is abstinence, as sayth Galien:[3] but that I holde not meritorie, if he do it only for the hele of his body. Seint Augustine wol that abstinence be don for vertue, and with patience. Abstinence (sayth he) is litel worth, but if a man have good will therto, and but it be enforced by patience and charitee, and that men don it for Goddes sake, and in hope to have the blisse in heven.

The felawes of abstinence ben attemperance, that holdeth the mene in alle thinges; also shame, that escheweth all dishonestee; suffisance, that seketh no riche metes ne drinkes, ne doth no force of non outrageous appareilling of mete; mesure also, that restreineth by reson the unmesur-

[1] Accustomed.

[2] *I.e.*, over delicacy, a taste for rarities and dainty decoration of the table.

[3] Galen.

able appetit of eting: sobernesse also, that restreineth the outrage of drinke; sparing also, that restreineth the delicat ese, to sit long at mete, wherfore som folk standen of hir owen will whan they ete, because they wol ete at lese leiser.

De Luxurid.

After glotonie cometh lecherie, for thise two sinnes ben so nigh cosins, that oft time they wol not depart. God wote this sinne is ful displesant to God, for he said himself; Do no lecherie. And therfore he putteth gret peine ayenst this sinne. For in the old lawe, if a woman thrall[1] were taken in this sinne, she shuld be beten with staves to the deth: and if she were a gentilwoman, she shuld be slain with stones: and if she were a bishoppes doughter, she shuld be brent by Goddes commandement. Moreover, for the sinne of lecherie God dreint all the world, and after that he brent five citees with thonder and lightning, and sanke hem doun into hell.

Now let us speke than of the said stinking sinne of lecherie, that men clepen avoutrie,[2] that is of wedded folk, that is to say, if that on of hem be wedded, or elles both. Seint John sayth, That avouterers shul ben in helle in a stacke brenning of fire and of brimstone, in fire for hir lecherie, in brimstone for the stenche of hir ordure. Certes the breking of this sacrament is an horrible thing: it was made of God himself in Paradis, and confermed by Jesu Crist, as witnesseth Seint Mathew in the Gospel: a man shal let fader and moder, and take him to his wif, and they shal be two in on flesh. This sacrament betokeneth the knitting together of Crist and holy chirche. And not only that God forbade avoutrie in dede, but also he commanded, that thou shuldest not coveit thy neighboures wif. In this heste (sayth Seint Augustine) is forboden all maner coveitise to do lecherie. Lo, what sayth Seint Mathew in the Gospel, That who so seeth a woman, to coveitise of his lust, he hath don lecherie with hire in his herte. Here may ye see, that not only the dede of this sin is forboden, but eke the desire to don that sinne. This cursed sinne annoyeth grevously hem that it haunt: and first to the soule, for he obligeth it to sinne and to peine of deth, which is perdurable; and to the body

[1] Slave. [2] Adultery.

annoyeth it grevously also, for it drieth him and wasteth, and shent[1] him, and of his blood he maketh sacrifice to the fend of helle: it wasteth eke his catel and his substance. And certes, if it be a foule thing a man to waste his catel on women, yet is it a fouler thing, whan that for swiche ordure women dispenden upon men hir catel and hir substance. This sinne, as sayth the Prophet, bereveth man and woman hir good fame and all hir honour, and it is ful plesant to the devil: for therby winneth he the moste partie of this wretched world. And right as a marchant deliteth him most in that chaffare[2] which he hath most avantage and profite of, right so deliteth the fend in this ordure.

This is that other hond of the devil, with five fingers, to cacche the peple to his vilanie. The first fingre is the foole loking of the foole woman and of the foole man, that sleth right as the Basilicok[3] sleth folk by venime of his sight: for the coveitise of the eyen foloweth the coveitise of the herte. The second fingre is the vilains touching in wicked maner. And therfore sayth Salomon, that who so toucheth and handleth a woman, he fareth as the man that handleth the scorpion, which stingeth and sodenly sleth thurgh his enveniming; or as who so that toucheth warme pitch it shendeth his fingers. The thridde is foule wordes, which fareth like fire, which right anon brenneth the herte. The fourth finger is kissing: and trewely he were a gret foole that wold kisse the mouthe of a brenning oven or of a fourneis; and more fooles ben they that kissen in vilainie, for that mouth is the mouth of helle; and namely thise olde dotarde holours, which wol kisse, and flicker, and besie hemself, though they may nought do. Certes they ben like to houndes: for an hound whan he cometh by the roser, or by other bushes, though so be that he may not pisse, yet wol he heve up his leg and make a contenance to pisse. And for that many man weneth that he may not sinne for no likerousnesse that he doth with his wif, trewely that opinion is false: God wote a man may slee himself with his owen knif, and make himself dronken of his owen tonne. Certes be it wif, be it childe, or any worldly thing, that he loveth before God, it is his maumet,[4] and he is an idolastre. A man shuld love his wif

[1] Ruineth. [2] Merchandize.
[3] Basilisk. [4] Idol.

by discretion, patiently and attemprely, and than is she as though it were his suster. The fifth fingre of the divels hond, is the stinking dede of lecherie. Trewely the five fingers of glotonie the fend putteth in the wombe of a man: and with his five fingers of lecherie he gripeth him by the reines, for to throwe him into the fourneis of helle, ther as they shul have the fire and the wormes that ever shul lasten, and weping and wayling, and sharpe hunger and thurst, and grislinesse of divels, whiche shul all-to-rende hem withouten respite and withouten ende. Of lecherie, as I sayd, sourden and springen divers spices: as fornication, that is betwene man and woman which ben not maried, and is dedly sinne, and ayenst nature. All that is enemy and destruction to nature, is ayenst nature. Parfay the reson of a man eke telleth him wel that it is dedly sinne: for as moche as God forbad lecherie. And Seint Poule yeveth hem the regne, that n'is dewe to no wight but to hem that don dedely sinne. Another sinne of lecherie is to bereven a maid of hire maidenhed, for he that so doth, certes he casteth a mayden out of the highest degree that is in this present lif, and bereveth hire thilke precious fruit that the book clepeth the hundreth fruit. I ne can say it non otherwise in English, but in Latine it hight *Centesimus fructus.* Certes he that so doth, is the cause of many damages and vilanies, mo than any man can reken: right as he somtime is cause of all dammages that bestes do in the feld, that breketh the hedge of the closure, thurgh which he destroyeth that may not be restored: for certes no more may maidenhed be restored, than an arme, that is smitten fro the body, may returne aven[1] and wexe: she may have mercy, this wote I wel, if that she have will to do penitence, but never shal it be but that she is corrupte. And all be it so that I have spoke somwhat of avoutrie, it is good to shewe the periles that longen to avoutrie, for to eschewe that foule sinne. Avoutrie, in Latine, is for to saye, approching of another mannes bedde, thurgh whiche tho, that somtime were on[2] fleshe, abandone hir bodies to other persons. Of this sinne, as sayth the wise man, folow many harmes: firste breking of feith; and certes feith is the key of Cristendom, and whan that key is broken and lorne, sothly Cristendom is lorne, and stont[3] vaine and without fruit.

[1] Again. [2] One. [3] Standeth.

This sinne also is theft, for theft generally is to reve[1] a wight his thinges ayenst his will. Certes, this is the foulest theft that may be, whan that a woman steleth hire body from hire husbond, and yeveth it to hire holour to defoule it: and steleth hire soule fro Crist, and yeveth it to the devil: this is a fouler thefte than for to breke a chirche and stele away the chalice, for thise avouterers breken the temple of God spirituelly, and stelen the vessell of grace; that is the body and the soule: for which Criste shal destroy hem, as sayth Seint Poule. Sothly of this theft douted gretly Joseph, whan that his Lordes wif prayed him of vilainie, whan he sayde: Lo, my Lady, how my Lord hath take to me under my warde[2] all that he hath in this world, ne nothing is out of my power, but only ye that ben his wif: and how shuld I than do this wickednesse, and sinne so horribly ayenst God, and ayenst my Lord? God it forbede. Alas! all to litel is swiche trouth now yfounde. The thridde harme is the filth, thurgh which they breke the commandement of God, and defoule the auter of matrimonies, that is Crist. For certes, in so moche as the sacrament of mariage is so noble and so digne, so moche is it the greter sinne for to breke it: for God made mariage in Paradis in the estate of innocencie, to multiplie mankinde to the service of God, and therfore is the breking therof the more grevous, of which breking come false heires oft time, that wrongfully occupien folkes heritages: and therfore wol Crist put hem out of the regne of heven, that is heritage to good folk. Of this breking cometh eke oft time, that folk unware wedde or sinne with hir owen kinrede: and namely thise harlottes, that haunten bordelles of thise foule women, that may be likened to a commune gong,[3] wheras men purge hir ordure. What say we also of putours,[4] that live by the horrible sinne of puterie, and constreine women to yelde hem a certain rent of hir bodily puterie, ye, somtime his owen wif or his childe, as don thise baudes? certes, thise ben cursed sinnes. Understond also, that avoutrie is set in the ten commandements betwene theft and manslaughter, for it is the gretest theft that may be, for it is theft of body and of soule, and it is like to homicide, for it kerveth[5] atwo and breketh atwo

[1] Deprive of. [2] Placed under my care.
[3] A jakes. [4] Whoremongers. [5] Cutteth.

hem that first were made on flesh. And therfore by the old lawe of God they shuld be slaine, but nathelesse, by the lawe of Jesu Crist, that is the lawe of pitee, whan he sayd to the woman that was found in avoutrie, and shuld have be slain with stones, after the will of the Jewes, as was hir lawe; Go, sayd Jesu Crist, and have no more will to do sinne; sothly, the vengeance of avoutrie is awarded to the peine of helle, but if so be that it be discombered by penitence. Yet ben ther mo spices of this cursed sinne, as whan that on of hem is religious, or elles both, or of folk that ben entred into ordre, as subdeken, deken, or preest, or hospitalers: and ever the higher that he is in ordre, the greter is the sinne. The thinges that gretly agrege[1] hir sinne, is the breking of hir avow of chastitee, whan they received the ordre: and moreover soth is, that holy ordre is chefe of all the tresorie of God, and is a special signe and marke of chastitee, to shew that they ben joined to chastitee, which is the moste precious life that is: and thise ordered[2] folk ben specially titled to God, and of the special meinie of God: for which, whan they don dedly sinne, they ben the special traitours of God and of his peple, for they live by the peple to prave for the peple, and whiles they ben swiche traitours hir prayeres availe not to the peple. Preestes ben as angels, as by the mysterie of hir dignitee: but forsoth Seint Poule saith, That Sathanas transfourmeth him in an angel of light. Sothly, the preest that haunteth dedly sinne, he may be likened to an angel of derkenesse, transfourmed into an angel of light: he semeth an angel of light, but forsoth he is an angel of derkenesse. Swiche preestes be the sones of Hely, as is shewed in the book of Kinges, that they were the sones of Belial, that is, the divel. Belial is to say, withouten juge, and so faren they; hem thinketh that they be free, and have no juge, no more than hath a free bole that taketh which cow that him liketh in the toun. So faren they by women; for right as on free boll is ynough for a toun, right so is a wicked preest corruption ynough for all a parish, or for all a countree: thise preestes, as sayth the book, ne cannot minister the mysterie of preesthood to the peple, ne they knowe not God, ne they hold hem not apaied,[3] as saith the book, of sodden flesh that was to hem offred, but they take by force the flesh that is raw. Certes,

[1] Increase. [2] In orders, ordained. [3] Satisfied.

right so thise shrewes ne hold hem not apaied of rosted flesh and sodden, with which the peple feden hem in gret reverence, but they wol have raw flesh as folkes wives and hir doughters: and certes, thise women that consenten to hir harlotrie, don gret wrong to Crist and to holy Chirche, and to all Halowes, and to all Soules, for they bereven all thise hem that shuld worship Crist and holy Chirche, and pray for Cristen soules: and therfore han swiche preestes, and hir lemmans also that consenten to hir lecherie, the malison of the court Cristen, til they come to amendement. The thridde spice of avoutrie is somtime betwix a man and his wif, and that is, whan they take no regard in hir assembling but only to hir fleshly delit, as saith Seint Jerome, and ne recken of nothing but that they ben assembled because they ben maried; all is good ynough, as thinketh to hem. But in swiche folk hath the divel power, as said the angel Raphael to Tobie, for in hir assembling, they putten Jesu Crist out of hir herte, and yeven hemself to all ordure. The fourth spice is of hem that assemble with hir kinrede, or with hem that ben of on affinitee, or elles with hem with which hir fathers or hir kinred have deled in the sinne of lecherie: this sinne maketh hem like to houndes, that taken no kepe of kinrede. And certes, parentele[1] is in two maners: eyther gostly or fleshly: gostly, is for to delen with hir godsibbes:[2] for right so as he that engendreth a child, is his fleshly father, right so is his godfather his father spirituel: for which a woman may in no lesse sinne assemble with hire godsib, than with hir owen fleshly broder. The fifthe spice is that abhominable sinne, of which abhominable sinne no man unneth ought to speke ne write, natheles it is openly rehersed in holy writ. This cursednesse don men and women in diverse entent and in diverse maner: but though that holy writ speke of horrible sinne, certes holy writ may not be defouled, no more than the sonne that shineth on the myxene.[3] Another sinne appertaineth to lecherie, that cometh in sleping, and this sinne cometh often to hem that ben maidens, and eke to hem that ben corrupt; and this sinne men call pollution, that cometh of foure maners; somtime it cometh of languishing of the body, for the humours ben to ranke and haboundant in the body of

[1] Parentage. [2] Gossip, *i.e.*, godfather or mother. [3] Dunghill.

man; somtime of infirmitee, for feblenesse of the vertue retentif, as phisike maketh mention; somtime of surfet of mete and drinke; and somtime of vilains thoughtes that ben enclosed in mannes minde whan he goth to slepe, which may not be withouten sinne; for whiche men must kepe hem wisely, or elles may they sinne ful grevously.

Remedium Luxuriæ.

Now cometh the remedy ayenst lecherie, and that is generally chastitee and continence, that restreineth all disordinate mevings that comen of fleshly talents: and ever the greter merite shal he have that most restreineth the wicked enchaufing or ardure of this sinne; and this is in two maners: that is to say, chastitee in mariage, and chastitee in widewhood. Now shalt thou understonde, that matrimony is leful assembling of man and woman, that receiven by vertue of this sacrement the bonde, thurgh whiche they may not be departed[1] in all hir lif, that is to say, while that they live bothe. This, as saith the book, is a ful gret sacrement; God made it (as I have said) in paradis, and wold himself be borne in mariage: and for to halowe mariage he was at a wedding, wheras[2] he tourned water into wine, whiche was the first miracle that he wrought in erthe before his disciples. The trewe effect of mariage clenseth fornication, and replenisheth holy chirche of good lignage, for that is the ende of mariage, and chaungeth dedly sinne into venial sinne betwene hem that ben wedded, and maketh the hertes all on of hem that ben ywedded, as wel as the bodies. This is veray mariage that was established by God, er that sinne began, whan naturel lawe was in his right point in paradis; and it was ordeined, that o man shuld have but o woman, and o woman but o man, as sayth Seint Augustine, by many resons.

First, for mariage is figured betwix Crist and holy chirche; and another is, for a man is hed of the woman; (algate by ordinance it shuld be so;) for if a woman had mo men than on, than shuld she have mo hedes than on, and that were an horrible thing before God; and also a woman might not plese many folk at ones: and also ther shuld never be pees ne rest among hem, for everich of hem wold axe his

[1] Separated. [2] At which.

owen right. And furthermore, no man shuld knowe his owen engendrure, ne who shuld have his heritage, and the woman shuld be the lesse beloved for the time that she were conjunct to many men.

Now cometh how that a man shuld bere him with his wif, and namely in two thinges, that is to say, in suffrance and in reverence, and this shewed Crist whan he firste made woman. For he ne made hire of the hed of Adam, for she shuld not claime to gret lordshippe; for ther as the woman hath the maistrie, she maketh to moche disarray: ther nede non ensamples of this, the experience that we have day by day ought ynough suffice. Also certes, God ne made not woman of the foot of Adam, for she shuld not be holden to lowe, for she cannot patiently suffer: but God made woman of the rib of Adam, for woman shuld be felaw unto man. Man shuld bere him to his wif in feith, in trouth, and in love; as sayth Seint Poule, that a man shuld love his wif, as Crist loved holy chirche, that loved it so wel that he died for it: so shuld a man for his wif, if it were nede.

Now how that a woman shuld be subget to hire husbond, that telleth Seint Peter; first in obedience. And, eke as sayth the decree, a woman that is a wif, as long as she is a wif, she hath non auctoritee to swere ne bere witnesse, without leve of hire husbonde, that is hire lord; algate he shuld be so by reson. She shuld also serve him in all honestee, and ben attempre of hire array. I wete wel that they shuld set hir entent to plese hir husbonds, but not by queintise of hir array. Seint Jerom sayth: wives that ben appareilled in silke and precious purple, ne mow not cloth hem in Jesu Crist. Seint Gregorie sayth also: that no wight seketh precious array, but only for vain glorie to be honoured the more of the peple. It is a gret folie, a woman to have a faire array outward, and hireself to be foule inward. A wif shuld also be mesurable in loking, in bering, and in laughing, and discrete in all hire wordes and hire dedes, and above all worldly thinges, she shulde love hire husbonde with all hire herte, and to him be trewe of hire body: so shuld every husbond eke be trewe to his wif: for sith that all the body is the husbondes, so shuld hire herte be also, or elles ther is betwix hem two, as in that, no parfit mariage. Than shul men understond, that for three thinges a man and his wif fleshly may assemble. The first is, for the entent of engendrure of children, to the

service of God, for certes that is the cause final of matrimonie. Another cause is, to yelde eche of hem to other the dettes of hir bodies: for neyther of hem hath power of his owen bodie. The thridde is, for to eschew lecherie and vilanie. The fourth is for soth dedly sinne. As to the first, it is meritorie: the second also, for, as sayth the decree, she hath merite of chastitee, that yeldeth to hire husbond the dette of hire body, ye though it be ayenst hire liking, and the lust of hire herte. The thridde maner is venial sinne; trewely, scarsely may any of thise be without venial sinne, for the corruption and for the delit therof. The fourth maner is for to understond, if they assemble only for amourous love, and for non of the foresaid causes, but for to accomplish hir brenning delit, they recke not how oft, sothly it is dedly sinne: and yet, with sorwe, som folk wol peine hem more to do, than to hir appetit sufficeth.

The second maner of chastitee is for to be a clene widew, and eschue the embracing of a man, and desire the embracing of Jesu Crist. Thise ben tho that have ben wives, and have forgon hir husbondes, and eke women that have don lecherie, and ben releved by penance. And certes, if that a wif coud kepe hire all chast, by licence of hire husbond, so that she yave no cause ne non occasion that he agilted, it were to hire a gret merite. This maner of women, that observen chastitee, must be clene in herte as wel as in body, and in thought, and mesurable in clothing and in contenance, abstinent in eting and drinking, in speking, and in dede, and than is she the vessel or the boiste[1] of the blessed Magdeleine, that fulfilleth holy chirche of good odour. The thridde maner of chastitee is virginitee, and it behoveth that she be holy in herte, and clene of body, than is she the spouse of Jesu Crist, and she is the lif of angels: she is the preising of this world, and she is as thise martirs in egalitee:[2] she hath in hire, that tonge may not telle, ne herte thinke. Virginitee bare our Lord Jesu Crist, and virgin was himself.

Another remedie against lecherie is specially to withdraw swiche thinges, as yeven occasion to that vilanie: as ese, eting, and drinking: for certes, whan the pot boileth strongly, the best remedie is to withdraw the fire. Sleping long in gret quiet is also a gret nourice to lecherie.

Another remedie ayenst lecherie is, that a man or a

[1] Box. [2] Equality, station.

woman eschewe the compagnie of hem, by which he douteth to be tempted: for all be it so that the dede be withstonden, yet is ther gret temptation. Sothly a white wall, although it ne brenne not fully with sticking of a candle, yet is the wall black of the leyte. Ful oft time I rede, that no man trust in his owen perfection, but he be stronger than Sampson, or holier than David, or wiser than Salomon.

Now after that I have declared you as I can of the seven dedly sinnes, and som of hir braunches, and the remedies, sothly, if I coude, I wold tell you the ten commandements, but so high doctrine I lete to divines.[1] Natheles, I hope to God they ben touched in this tretise everich of hem alle.

Now for as moche as the second part of penitence stont in confession of mouth, as I began in the first chapitre, I say Seint Augustine saith: Sinne is every word and every dede, and all that men coveiten ayenst the law of Jesu Crist; and this is for to sinne, in herte, in mouth, and in dede, by the five wittes, which ben sight, hering, smelling, tasting or savouring, and feling. Now is it good to understond the circumstances, that agregen[2] moche every sinne. Thou shalt consider what thou art that dost the sinne, whether thou be male or female, yonge or olde, gentil or thrall, free or servant, hole or sike, wedded or single, ordered or unordered, wise or foole, clerk or seculer; if she be of thy kinred, bodily or gostly, or non; if any of thy kinred have sinned with hire or no, and many mo thinges.

Another circumstaunce is this, whether it be don in fornication, or in advoutrie, or no, in maner of homicide or non, a horrible gret sinne or smal, and how long thou hast continued in sinne. The thridde circumstance is the place,

[1] See before, vs. 17366-71. "The exposition of this—I betake to the maisters of Theologie." The secular clergy, in the time of Chaucer, being generally very ignorant, it would not have been in character, I suppose, to represent the Persone as a deep divine, though a very pious, worthy Priest. The Frere, whose brethren had the largest share of the learning which was then in fashion, is made to speak with great contempt of the Parochial Pastors, ver. 7590.

"This every *lewed* Vicar and Person
Can say, &c."

And yet in the Person's Character, ver. 402, we are told, that—

"He was also a *lerned* man, a *clerk*."

It may be doubted therefore, whether in these passages Chaucer may not speak for himself, forgetting or neglecting the character of the real speaker.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Increase.

ther thou hast don sinne, whether in other mennes houses, or in thin owen, in feld, in chirche, or in chirchhawe, in chirche dedicate, or non. For if the chirche be halowed, and man or woman spille[1] his kinde within that place, by way of sinne or by wicked temptation, the chirche were enterdited[2] til it were reconciled by the Bishop; and if it were a preest that did swiche vilanie, the terme of all his lif he shuld no more sing Masse: and if he did, he shuld do dedly sinne, at every time that he so song Masse. The fourth circumstance is, by whiche mediatours, as by messagers, or for enticement, or for consentment, to bere compagnie with felawship; for many a wretche, for to bere felawship, wol go to the divel of helle. Wherfore, they that eggen[3] or consenten to the sinne, ben partners of the sinne, and of the dampnation of the sinner. The fifth circumstance is, how many times that he hath sinned, if it be in his minde, and how oft he hath fallen. For he that oft falleth in sinne, he despiseth the mercy of God, and encreseth his sinne, and is unkind to Crist, and he waxeth the more feble to withstand sinne, and sinneth the more lightly, and the later ariseth, and is more slow to shrive him, and namely[4] to him that hath ben his confessour. For which that folk, whan they fall ayen to hir old folies, either they forleten hir old confessour al utterly, or elles they departen[5] hir shrift in divers places: but sothly swiche departed shrift deserveth no mercie of God for hir sinnes. The sixte circumstance is, why that a man sinneth, as by what temptation; and if himself procure thilke temptation, or by exciting of other folk; or if he sinne with a woman by force or by hire owen assent; or if the woman maugre hire hed have ben enforced or non, this shal she tell, and wheder it were for covetise or poverte, and if it were by hire procuring or non, and swiche other thinges. The seventh circumstance is, in what maner he hath don his sinne, or how that she hath suffered that folk have don to hire. And the same shal the man tell plainly, with all the circumstances, and wheder he hath sinned with commun bordel women or non, or don his sinne in holy times or non, in fasting times or non, or before his shrift, or after his later shrift, and hath peraventure broken therby his penance enjoined, by whos helpe or whos conseil, by sorcerie

[1] Ruin. [2] Interdicted. [3] Egg on, encourage.
[4] More especially. [5] Divide.

or crafte, all must be told. All thise thinges, after that they ben gret or smale, engreggen[1] the conscience of man or woman. And eke the preest that is thy juge, may the better be avised of his jugement in yeving of penance, and that shal be after thy contrition. For understond wel, that after the time that a man hath defouled his baptisme by sinne, if he wol come to salvation, ther is non other way but by penance, and shrifte, and satisfaction; and namely by tho two, if ther be a confessour to whom he may shrive him, and that he first be veray contrite and repentant, and the thridde if he have lif to performe it.

Than shal a man loke and consider, that if he wol make a trewe and a profitable confession, ther must be foure conditions. First it must be in sorowful bitternesse of herte, as sayth the King Ezechiel to God; I wol remember all the yeres of my lif in the bitternesse of my herte. This condition of bitternesse hath five signes; The first is, that confession must be shamefast, not for to coveren ne hide his sinne, but for he hath agilted his God and defouled his soule. And hereof sayth Seint Augustin: the herte travaileth for shame of his sinne, and for he hath gret shamfastnesse he is digne to have gret mercie of God. Swiche was the confession of the Publican, that wold not heve up his eyen to heven for he had offended God of heven: for which shamefastnesse he had anon the mercy of God. And therfore saith Seint Augustine: That swiche shamefast folk ben next foryevenesse and mercy. Another signe, is humilitee in confession: of whiche sayth Seint Peter; Humbleth you under the might of God: the hond of God is mighty in confession, for therby God foryeveth thee thy sinnes, for he alone hath the power. And this humilitee shal be in herte, and in signe outwarde: for right as he hath humilitee to God in his herte, right so shuld he humble his body outward to the preest, that sitteth in Goddes place. For which in no maner, sith that Crist is soveraine, and the preest mene and mediatour betwix Crist and the sinner, and the sinner is last by way of reson, than shuld not the sinner sitte as high as his confessour, but knele before him or at his feet, but if maladie distrouble it: for he shal not take kepe who sitteth ther, but in whos place he sitteth. A man that hath trespassed to a Lord, and cometh for to axe mercie and maken his

[1] Aggravate.

accorde, and setteth him doun anon by the Lord, men wolde holde him outrageous, and not worthy so sone for to have remission ne mercy. The thridde signe is, that the shrift shuld be ful of teres, if men mowen wepe, and if they mowe not wepe with hir bodily eyen, than let hem wepe in hir herte. Swiche was the confession of Seint Peter; for after that he had forsake Jesu Crist, he went out and wept ful bitterly. The fourth signe is, that he ne lete not for shame to shrive him and shewe his confession. Swiche was the confession of Magdeleine, that ne spared, for no shame of hem that weren at the feste, to go to our Lord Jesu Crist and beknowe to him hire sinnes. The fifthe signe is, that a man or a woman be obeisant to receive the penance that hem is enjoined. For certes Jesu Crist for the gilt of man was obedient to the deth.

The second condition of veray confession is, that it be hastily don: for certes, if a man hadde a dedly wound, ever the lenger that he taried to warishe[1] himself, the more wold it corrupt and haste him to his deth, and also the wound wold be the werse for to hele. And right so fareth sinne, that longe time is in a man unshewed.[2] Certes a man ought hastily to shewe his sinnes for many causes; as for drede of deth, that cometh oft sodenly, and is in no certain what time it shal be, ne in what place; and eke the drenching of o sinne draweth in another: and also the lenger that he tarieth, the ferther is he fro Crist. And if he abide to his last day, scarcely may he shrive him or remembre him of his sinnes, or repent him for the grevous maladie of his deth. And for as moche as he ne hath in his lif herkened Jesu Crist, whan he hath spoken unto him, he shal crie unto our Lord at his last day, and scarcely wol he herken him. And understonde that this condition muste have foure thinges. First that the shrift be purveyed[3] afore, and avised, for wicked hast doth not profite; and that a man con shrive him of his sinnes, be it of pride, or envie, and so forth, with the spices and circumstances; and that he have comprehended in his minde the nombre and the gretnesse of his sinnes, and how longe he hath lien in sinne; and eke that he be contrite for his sinnes, and be in stedfast purpose (by the grace of God) never efte[4] to fall into sinne; and also that he drede[5] and countrewaite[6]

[1] Heal. [2] Unconfessed. [3] Foreseen.
[4] After. [5] Doubt. [6] Controvert.

himself, that he flee the occasions of sinne, to whiche he is inclined. Also thou shalt shrive thee of all thy sinnes to o man, and not parcelmele[1] to o man, and parcelmele to another; that is to understonde, in entent to depart[2] thy confession for shame or drede, for it is but strangling of thy soule. For certes, Jesu Crist is entierly all good, in him is not imperfection, and therfore either he foryeveth all parfitly, or elles never a dele. I say not that if thou be assigned to thy penitencer for certain sinne, that thou art bounde to shewe him all the remenant of thy sinnes, of whiche thou hast ben shriven of thy curat, but if it like thee of thyn humilitee; this is no departing of shrift. Ne I say not, ther as I speke of division of confession, that if thou have licence to shrive thee to a discrete and an honest preest, and wher thee liketh, and by the licence of thy curat, that thou ne mayest wel shrive thee to him of all thy sinnes: but lete no blot be behind: lete no sinne be untolde as fer as thou hast remembrance. And whan thou shalt be shriven of thy curat, tell him eke all the sinnes that thou hast don sith thou were laste shriven. This is no wicked entente of division of shrift.

Also the veray shrift axeth certain conditions. First that thou shrive thee by thy free will, not constreined, ne for shame of folk, ne for maladie, or swiche other thinges: for it is reson, that he that trespasseth by his free will, that by his free will he confesse his trespas; and that non other man telle his sinne but himself: ne he shal not nay, ne deny his sinne, ne wrath him ayenst the preest for amonesting him to lete his sinne. The second condition is, that thy shrift be lawful, that is to say, that thou that shrivest thee, and eke the preest that hereth thy confession, be verayly in the feith of holy chirche, and that a man ne be not despeired of the mercie of Jesu Crist, as Cain and Judas were. And eke a man muste accuse himself of his owen trespas and not another: but he shal blame and wite himselfe of his owen malice and of his sinne, and non other: but natheles, if that another man be encheson or enticer of his sinne, or the estate of the person be swiche by which his sinne is agregged, or elles that he may not plainly shrive him but he tell the person with whiche he hath sinned, than may he tell, so that his entent ne be not to backbite the person, but only to declare his confession.

[1] Piecemeal. [2] Divide.

Thou ne shalt not also make no lesinges in thy confession for humilitee, peraventure, to say that thou hast committed and don swiche sinnes, of which that thou ne were never guilty. For Seint Augustine sayth; if that thou, because of thine humilitee, makest a lesing on thyself, though thou were not in sinne before, yet arte thou thus in sinne through thy lesing. Thou must also shew thy sinne by thy propre mouth, but thou be dombe, and not by no lettre: for thou that hast don the sinne, thou shalt have the shame of the confession. Thou shalt not eke peint thy confession, with faire and subtil wordes, to cover the more thy sinne: for thou begilest thou thyself, and not the preest: thou must tell it plainly, be it never so foule ne so horrible. Thou shalt eke shrive thee to a preest that is discrete to conseille thee: and eke thou shalt not shrive thee for vaine glorie, ne for ypocrisie, ne for no cause, but only for the doute of Jesu Crist, and the hele of thy soule. Thou shalt not eke renne to the preest al sodenly, to tell him lightly thy sinne, as who telleth a jape or a tale, but avisedly and with good devotion; and generally shrive thee ofte: if thou ofte fall, ofte arise by confession. And though thou shrive thee ofter than ones of sinne which thou hast be shriven of, it is more merite: and, as sayth Seint Augustine, thou shalt have the more lightly relese and grace of God, both of sinne and of peine. And certes ones a yere at the lest way it is lawful to be houseled, for sothely ones a yere all thinges in the erthe renovelen.[1]

Explicit secunda pars Penitentie: et sequitur tertia pars.

Now have I told you of veray confession, that is the seconde part of penitence: The thridde part is satisfaction, and that stont most generally in almesse dede and in bodily peine. Now ben ther three maner of almesse: contrition of herte, wher a man offreth himself to God: another is, to have pitee of the defaute of his neighbour: and the thridde is, in yeving of good conseil, gostly and bodily, wher as men have nede, and namely in sustenance of mannes food. And take kepe that a man hath nede of thise thinges generally, he hath nede of food, of clothing, and of herberow,[2] he hath nede of charitable conseilling and visiting in prison and in

[1] Are renewed. [2] Lodging.

maladie, and sepulture of his ded body. And if thou maiest not visite the nedeful in prison in thy person, visite hem with thy message and thy yeftes. Thise ben generally the almesses and werkes of charitee, of hem that have temporel richesses, or discretion in conseilling. Of thise werkes shalt thou heren at the day of dome.

This almesse shuldest thou do of thy propre thinges, and hastily,[1] and prively if thou mayest: but natheles, if thou mayest not do it prively, thou shalt not forbere to do almesse, though men see it, so that it be not don for thanke of the world, but only to have thanke of Jesu Crist. For, as witnesseth Seint Mathewe, *Cap.* v. a citee may not be hid that is sette on a mountaine, ne men light not a lanterne, to put it under a bushell, but setten it upon a candlesticke, to lighten the men in the hous: right so shal your light lighten before men, that they mowe see your good werkes, and glorifie your Fader that is in heven.

Now as for to speke of bodily peine, it stont in praiers, in waking, in fasting, and in vertuous teching. Of orisons ye shul understond, that orisons or prayers, is to say, a pitous will of herte, that setteth it in God, and expresseth it by word outward, to remeve harmes, and to have thinges spirituel and perdurable, and somtime temporel thinges. Of which orisons, certes in the orison of the *Paternoster* hath Jesu Crist enclosed most thinges. Certes it is privileged of three thinges in his dignitee, for whiche it is more digne than any other prayer: for that Jesu Crist himself made it: and it is short, for it shuld be coude the more lightly, and to hold it the more esie in herte, and helpe himself the ofter with this orison, and for a man shuld be the lesse wery to say it, and for a man may not excuse him to lerne it, it is so shorte and so esie: and for it comprehendeth in himself all good prayers. The exposition of this holy prayer, that is so excellent and so digne, I betake to the maisters of theologie, save thus moche wol I say, that whan thou prayest, that God shuld foryeve thee thy giltes as thou foryevest hem that have agilted thee, be wel ware that thou be not out of charitee. This holy orison amenuseth eke venial sinne, and therfore it appertaineth specially to penitence.

This prayer must be trewely sayd, and in perfect feith, and that men prayen to God ordinately, discretely, and

[1] Readily.

devoutly: and alway a man shal put his will to be subgette to the will of God. This orison must eke be sayd with gret humblesse and ful pure, and honestly, and not to the annoyance of any man or woman. It must eke be continued with werkes of charitee. It availeth eke ayenst the vices of the soule: for, as sayth Seint Jerome, by fasting ben saved the vices of the flesh, and by prayer the vices of the soule.

After this thou shalt understonde, that bodily peine stont in waking. For Jesu Crist sayth: wake ye and pray ye, that ye ne enter into wicked temptation. Ye shul understond also, that fasting stont in three thinges: in forbering of bodily mete and drinke, in forbering of worldly jolitee, and in forbering of dedly sin: this is to say, that a man shall kepe him fro dedly sinne with all his might.

And thou shalt understonde also, that God ordeined fasting, and to fasting apperteineth foure thinges. Largenesse to poure folk: gladnesse of herte spirituel: not to be angry ne annoied, ne grutch for he fasteth: and also resonable houre for to ete by mesure, that is to say, a man shal not ete in untime, ne sit the longer at the table, for he fasteth.

Than shalt thou understonde, that bodily peine stont in discipline, or teching, by word, or by writing, or by ensample. Also in wering of here or of stamin,[1] or of habergeons on hir naked flesh for Cristes sake; but ware thee wel that swiche maner penances ne make not thin herte bitter or angry, ne annoied of thyself; for better is to cast away thin here than to cast away the swetenesse of our Lord Jesu Crist. And therfore saith Seint Poule: clothe you, as they that ben chosen of God in herte, of misericorde, debonairtree, suffrance, and swiche maner of clothing, of whiche Jesu Crist is more plesed than with the heres or habergeons.

Than is discipline eke, in knocking of thy brest, in scourging with yerdes, in kneling, in tribulation, in suffring patiently wronges that ben don to thee, and eke in patient suffring of maladies, or lesing of worldly catel, or wif, or child, or other frendes.

Than shalt thou understond, which thinges distourben penance, and this is in foure maners; that is drede, shame, hope, and wanhope, that is, desperation. And for to speke first of drede, for which he weneth that he may suffre no

[1] *Estamine*, a kind of woollen cloth.

penance, ther ayenst is remedie for to thinke, that bodily penance is but short and litel at regard of the peine of helle, that is so cruel and so longe, that it lasteth withouten ende.

Now ayenst the shame that a man hath to shrive him, and namely thise Ipocrites, that wold be holden so parfit, that they have no nede to shrive hem, ayenst that shame shuld a man thinke, that by way of reson, he that hath not ben ashamed to do foule thinges, certes him ought not be ashamed to do faire thinges, and that is confessions. A man shuld also thinke, that God seeth and knoweth al his thoughtes, and al his werkes, and to him may nothing be hid ne covered. Men shuld eke remembre hem of the shame that is to come at the day of dome, to hem that ben not penitent in this present lif: for all the creatures in heven, and in erthe, and in helle, shul see apertly all that they hiden in this world.

Now for to speke of the hope of hem, that ben so negligent and slowe to shrive hem: that stondeth in two maners. That on is, that he hopeth for to live long, and for to purchase moche richesse for his delit, and than he wol shrive him: and, as he sayeth, he may, as him semeth, than timely ynough come to shrift: another is, the surquedrie[1] that he hath in Cristes mercie. Ayenst the first vice, he shal thinke that our lif is in no sikernesse, and eke that all the richesse in this world ben in aventure, and passen as a shadowe on a wall; and, as sayth Seint Gregorie, that it apperteineth to the gret rightwisnesse of God, that never shal the peine stinte of hem, that never wold withdrawe hem from sinne, hir thankes,[2] but ever continue in sinne: for thilke perpetuel will to don sinne shall they have perpetuel peine.

Wanhope is in two maners. The first wanhope is, in the mercie of God: that other is, that they think that they ne might not long persever in goodnesse. The first wanhope cometh of that, he demeth that he hath sinned so gretly and so oft, and so long lyen in sinne, that he shal not be saved. Certes ayenst that cursed wanhope shulde he thinke, that the passion of Jesu Crist is more stronge for to unbinde, than sinne is strong for to binde. Ayenst the second wanhope he shal thinke, that as often as he falleth, he may arisen again by penitence: and though he never so longe hath lyen

[1] Conceit, too great confidence. [2] By their free will.

in sinne, the mercie of Crist is alway redy to receive him to mercie. Ayenst that wanhope that he demeth he shuld not longe persever in goodnesse, he shal think, that the feblenesse of the devil may nothing do, but if men wol suffre him: and eke he shal have strength of the helpe of Jesu Crist, and of all his chirche, and of the protection of angels, if him list.

Than shul men understonde, what is the fruit of penance; and after the wordes of Jesu Crist, it is an endeles blisse of heven, ther joye hath no contrariositee of wo ne grevance; ther all harmes ben passed of this present lif; ther as is sikernesse from the peines of helle; ther as is the blisful compagnie, that rejoycen hem ever mo everich of others joye; ther as the body of man, that whilom was foule and derke, is more clere than the sonne; ther as the body that whilom was sike and freele, feble and mortal, is immortal, and so strong and so hole, that ther ne may nothing appeire it: ther as is neither hunger, ne thurste, ne colde, but every soule replenished with the sight of the parfit knowing of God. This blisful regne mowe men purchase by poverte spirituel, and the glorie by lowlinesse, the plentee of joye by hunger and thurst, and the reste by travaile, and the lif by deth and mortification of sinne: to which life he us bring, that bought us with his precious blood. Amen.

Now preye I to hem alle that herken this litel tretise or reden it, that if ther be any thing in it that liketh hem, that therof they thanken our Lord Jesu Crist, of whom procedeth all witte and all godenesse; and if ther be any thing that displeseth hem, I preye hem also that they arrette[1] it to the defaute of myn unkonning, and not to my wille, that wold fayn have seyde better if I hadde had konning; for our boke seyth, all that is writen is writen for oure doctrine, and that is myn entente. Wherfore I beseke you mekely for the mercie of God that ye preye for me, that Crist have mercie of me, and foryeve me my giltes, [and namely of myn translations and enditinges of worldly vanitees, the which I revoke in my Retractions, as the boke of Troilus, the boke also of Fame, the boke of the five and twenty ladies, the boke of the Duchesse, the boke of Seint Valentines day of the Parlement of briddes,

[1] Impute.

the tales of Canterbury, thilke that sounen unto sinne, the boke of the Leon,[1] and many an other boke, if they were in my remembraunce, and many a song and many a lecherous lay, Crist of his grete mercie foryeve me the sinne. But of the translation of Boes of consolation, and other bokes of legendes of Seints, and of Omelies, and moralite, and devotion, that thanke I oure Lord Jesu Crist, and his blisful mother, and alle the Seintes in heven, beseking hem that they fro hensforth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to bewaile my giltes, and to stodien to the savation of my soule,] and graunte me grace of verray penance, confession and satisfaction to don in this present lif, thorgh the benigne grace of him, that is king of kinges and preste of alle prestes, that bought us with the precious blode of his herte, so that I mote ben on of hem atte the laste day of dome that shullen be saved; *qui cum Deo patre et Spiritu sancto vivis et regnas Deus per omnia secula. Amen.*

THE END OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.[2]

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[1] This has never been discovered in any MS.

[2] On the last paragraph, beginning "Now preye I," &c., Tyrwhitt has the following observations, which we present in a condensed form:

"What follows being found, with some small variations, in all complete MSS. (I believe) of the Canterbury Tales, and in both Caxton's editions, which were undoubtedly printed from MSS., there was no pretence to leave it out in this edition, however difficult it may be to give any satisfactory account of it.

"I must first take notice, that this passage in MS. Ask. 1. is introduced by these words—'Here taketh the maker his leve,' and is concluded by 'Here endeth the Persones Tale.' In Edit. Ca. 2, it is clearly separated from the Persones Tale, and entitled 'The Prayer.' In the MSS., in which it is also separated from the Persones Tale, I do not remember to have seen it distinguished by any title, either of *Prayer*, or *Revocation*; or *Retractation*, as it is called in the Preface to Ed. Urry. If we believe what is said in p. 582, line 39, Chaucer had written a distinct piece entitled *his Retractions*, in which he had revoked his blameable compositions.

"The just inference from these variations in the MSS. is, perhaps, that none of them are to be at all relied on; that different copyists have

given this passage the title that pleased them best, and have attributed it to the Persone or to Chaucer, as the matter seemed to them to be most suitable to the one or the other.

"Mr. Hearne, whose greatest weakness was not his incredulity, has declared his suspicion, 'that the Revocation, meaning this whole passage, is not genuine, but that it was made by the Monks.' App. to R. G. p. 603. I cannot go quite so far. I think, if the Monks had set about making a Revocation for Chaucer to be annexed to the Canterbury Tales, they would have made one more in form. The same objection lies to the supposal, that it was made by himself.

"The most probable hypothesis which has occurred to me for the solution of these difficulties, is to suppose that the beginning of this passage, except the words *or reden it* in p. 582, line 28, and the end make together the genuine conclusion of the Persones tale, and that the middle part, which I have inclosed between hooks, is an interpolation.

"It must be allowed, I think, as I have observed before in the Discourse, &c.; § xlii. that the appellation of 'litel tretise' suits better with the Persones tale taken singly, than with the whole work. The doubt expressed in line 30, 'if there be anything that displeaseth,' &c., is very agreeable to the manner in which the Persone speaks in his Prologue, ver. 17366. The mention of 'verray penance confession and satisfaction' in p. 583, line 12, seems to refer pointedly to the subject of the speaker's preceding discourse; and the title given to Christ in p. 583, line 15, 'Preste of all Prestes,' seems peculiarly proper in the mouth of a priest.

"So much for those parts which may be supposed to have originally belonged to the Persone. With respect to the middle part, I think it not improbable that Chaucer might be persuaded, by the Religious who attended him in his last illness, to revoke, or retract, certain of his works; or at least that they might give out, that he had made such Retractions as they thought proper. In either case, it is possible that the same zeal might think it expedient to join the substance of these Retractions to the Canterbury Tales, the antidote to the poison; and might accordingly procure the present interpolation to be made in the Epilogue to the Persones tale, taking care at the same time, by the insertion of the words '*or reden it*' in line 28, to convert that Epilogue from an address of the Persone to his *hearers* into an address of Chaucer to his *readers*.

"The mention of 'the boke of five and twenty ladies;' the reading of all the MSS., if genuine, affords a strong proof that this enumeration of Chaucer's works was not drawn up by himself; as there is no ground for believing that *the Legende of Good Women* ever contained, or was intended to contain, the histories of *five and twenty* Ladies. See note on ver. 4481. It is possible, however, that xxv. may have been put by mistake for xix.

"As to what is said of 'the tales of Canterbury,' &c., if we suppose that this passage was written by Chaucer himself, to make part of the conclusion of his Canterbury Tales, it must appear rather extraordinary that he should mention those tales in this general manner, and in the midst of his other works. It would have been more natural to have placed them either at the beginning or at the end of his catalogue. However, whether we suppose this list of Chaucer's exceptionable works to have

been drawn up by himself or by any other person, it is unaccountable that his translation of the *Roman de la Rose* should be omitted. If he translated the whole of that very extraordinary composition, as is most probable, he could scarce avoid being guilty of a much greater licentiousness, in sentiment as well as diction, than we find in any of his other writings. His translation, as we have it, breaks of at ver. 5370 of the original (ver. 5810. Ed. Urr.) and beginning again at ver. 11253, ends imperfect at ver. 13105. In the latter part we have a strong proof of the negligence of the first editor, who did not perceive that two leaves in his MS. were misplaced. The passage from ver. 7013 to ver. 7062 incl., and the passage from ver. 7257 to ver. 7304 incl., should be inserted after ver. 7160. The later Editors have all copied this, as well as many other blunders of less consequence, which they must have discovered. if they had consulted the French original."

ADDENDA.

P. 6, note 6. Sir Harris Nicholas, Notes, p. 142, observes: "It may, however, be doubted whether Chaucer did not mean that she could not speak French at all; for it seems that, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the expression, 'French of Stratford at Bow,' was a colloquial paraphrase for *English*."

P. 17, line 470. The word seems sometimes to have been written *gap-tothed;* for Saunders, in his scandalous account of Anne Boleyn, says: "She was ill-shaped and ugly, had six fingers, a *gag-tooth*, and a tumour under her chin." "Gap-toothed," would seem to indicate teeth which stood at a little distance from each other; but the meaning of a "gag-tooth" has not been ascertained.—*Sir Harris Nicolas, Notes to Preface*, p. 144.

P. 28, line 888, Large field to ear. Mr. Hippesley (Chapters on Early English Literature) appends to this word the note, "To plough." I suppose, from *aro;* and Mr. Cowden Clarke says, "To till, to plough." But is it not much more likely that to *ear*, means to *bring* to ear—to harvest? Elsewhere the Knight says, he lists not to speak of the chaff, nor the straw, but of the *corn* of his subject.—*Saunders' Canterbury Tales.*

P. 55, line 1931. The "yellow goldes" are the yellow flowers of the Turnsol.—*Saunders.*

P. 65, line 2292. This appears to refer to the species called *cerres*, the Turkey oak, one of the most graceful of all the known kinds, and which is very common all over the south-east of Europe. The oak was dedicated to Diana, so Emily wears "the green oak, cerial."—*Saunders*, v. i. p. 57.

P. 192, line 6990. Cotgrave explains the wariangle to be a small wood-pecker, black and white of colour, and but half as big as the ordinary green one. Speght, however, supposes it to refer to the butcher-bird.—*Saunders*, v. i. p. 167.

P. 282, line 10361. The eight days in each month, known by the Romans as the Ides, were reckoned backwards, from the 13th, except in the months of March, May, July, and October, when the reckoning was from the 15th. The 15th of March was therefore Cambuscan's birth-day.—*Saunders*, v. ii. p. 8.

P. 334, line 12340,—*blakeberied.* "The meaning of these words," observes Saunders, (v. ii. p. 79) "is said to be unknown, beyond their evident general expression of the recklessness of the Pardoner as to the spiritual welfare of those whom he professes to be so anxious about. But it seems to us the passage, their souls go *buried in black*, is a powerful poetical figure for souls lost in the blackness of final guilt and perdition."

THE END.

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